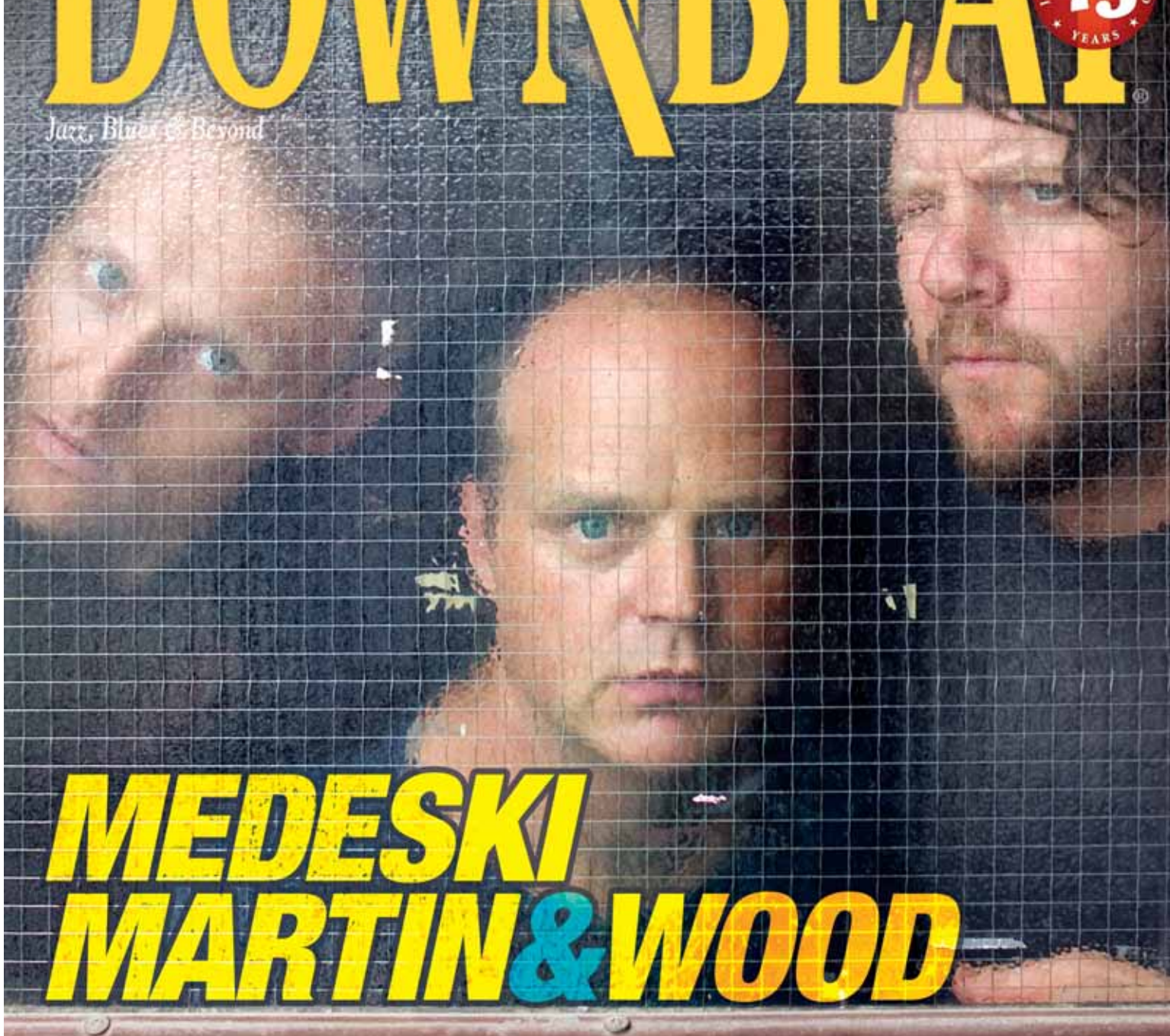


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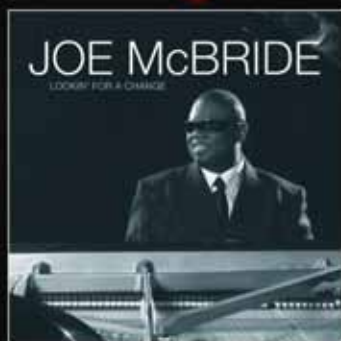
HUDV7167

A performance by the Yellowjackets is an experience that has as much to do with sight as it does with sound. Here they are, filmed at the New Morning, one of the most celebrated clubs in Paris in March, 2008.



HUCD3153

Hiroshima offers a retrospective of the early years of their 30-year history. *Legacy* features eleven songs from the first ten years of their prolific history – each re-recorded by the band's current six-member lineup with assistance from four guest artists.



HUCD3144

The tunes are from pop sources (Gnarls Barkley, Coldplay, Seal), but done in an undeniably traditional jazz style, with acoustic piano, drums and upright bass. The result is a very organic recording with a lot of soul, and a style and sophistication that can only be found in the jazz idiom.



HUCD3157

Mike Stern's neighborhood spanned two coasts and a stop in the Lone Star State to record with all of his friends on this CD: Richard Bona, Randy Brecker, Terri Lyne Carrington, Eric Johnson, Medeski Martin & Wood, Esperanza Spalding, Steve Vai, Dave Weckl, and more.



HUDV7166

Five-time GRAMMY® nominee and pivotal jazz figure Mike Stern took his trio to Europe, Asia and elsewhere throughout much of 2008 – an ambitious itinerary that included a memorable one-nighter at the New Morning, the longstanding and highly celebrated club in Paris, France. The night is documented here.



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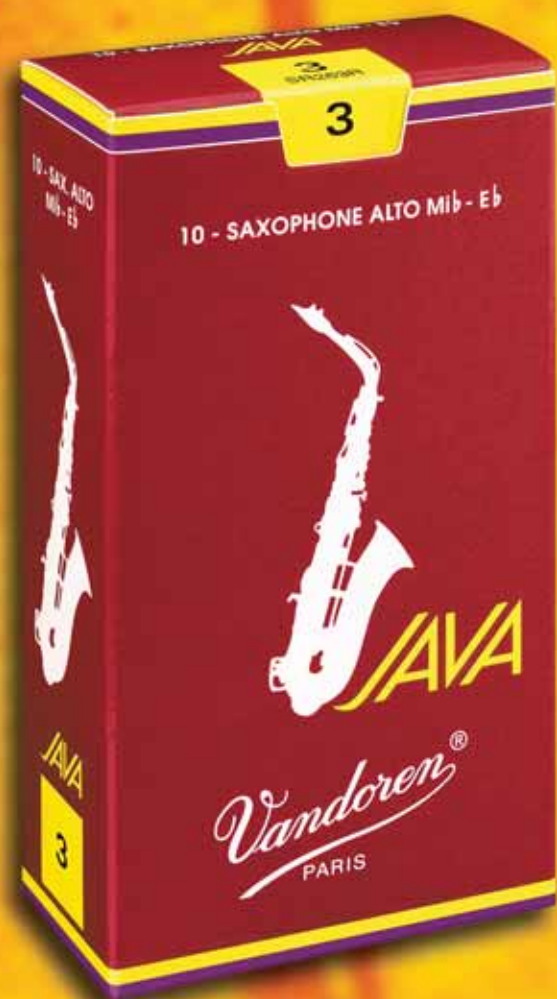
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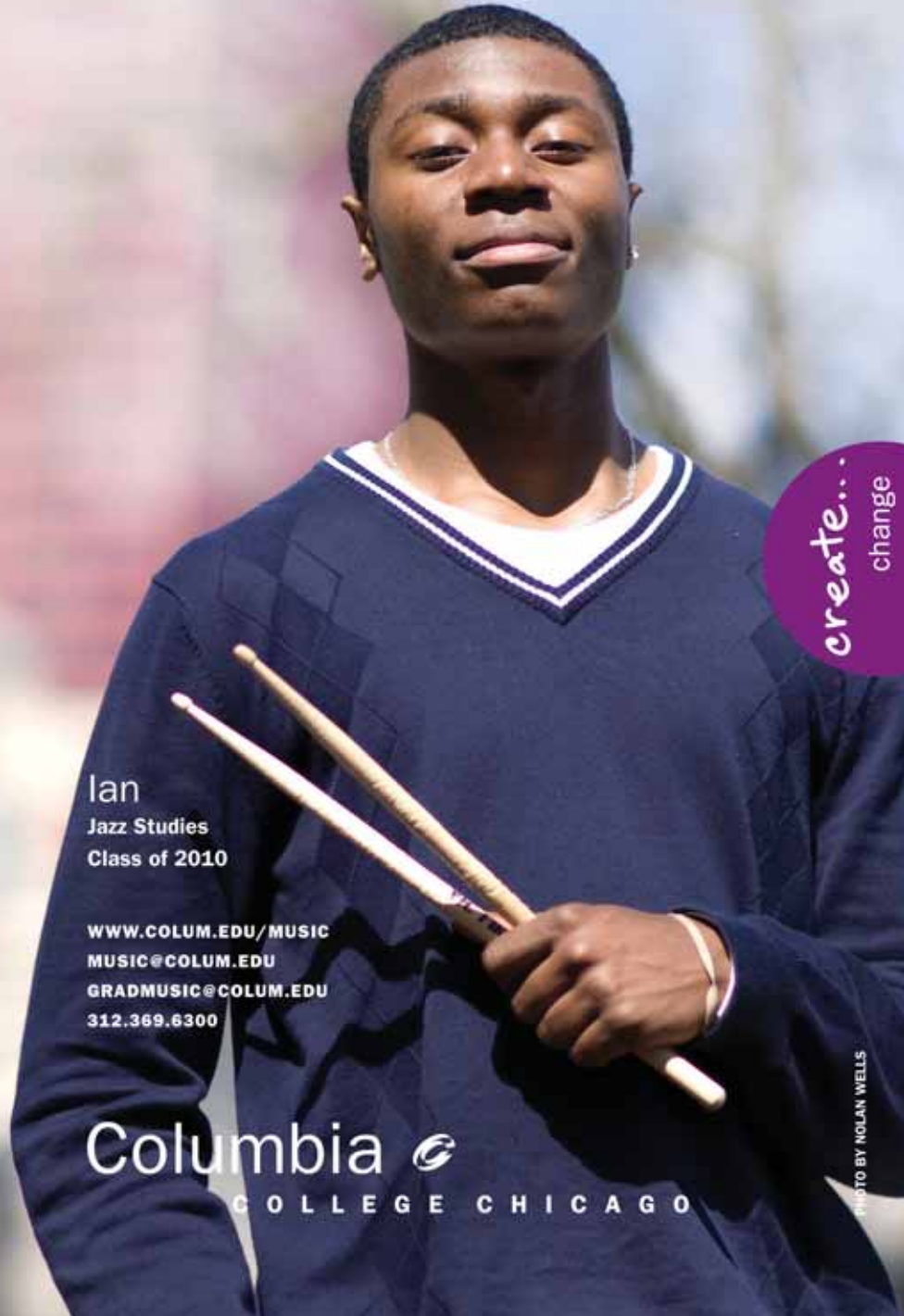
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Editor Ed Enright
Associate Editor Aaron Cohen
Art Director Ara Tirado
Production Associate Andy Williams
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ADVERTISING SALES

Record Companies & Schools

Jennifer Ruban-Gentile
630-941-2030
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Musical Instruments & East Coast Schools

Ritche Deraney
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Classified Advertising Sales

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OFFICES

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630-941-2030
Fax: 630-941-3210
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CUSTOMER SERVICE

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CONTRIBUTORS

Senior Contributors:

Michael Bourne, John McDonough, Howard Mandel

Austin: Michael Point; **Boston:** Fred Bouchard, Frank-John Hadley; **Chicago:** John Corbett, Alain Drouot, Michael Jackson, Peter Margasak, Bill Meyer, Mitch Myers, Paul Natkin, Howard Reich; **Denver:** Norman Provizer; **Indiana:** Mark Sheldon; **Iowa:** Will Smith; **Los Angeles:** Earl Gibson, Todd Jenkins, Kirk Silsbee, Chris Walker; **Joe Woodard;** **Michigan:** John Ephland; **Minneapolis:** Robin James; **Nashville:** Robert Doerschul; **New Orleans:** Erika Goldring, David Kunian; **New York:** Alan Bergman, Herb Boyd, Bill Douthart, Ira Gitter, Eugene Gologursky, Norm Harris, D.D. Jackson, Jimmy Katz, Jim Macnie, Ken Micallef, Jennifer Odell, Dan Ouellette, Ted Panken, Richard Seidel, Tom Staudter, Jack Vartoogian, Michael Weintrob, Kevin Whitehead; **North Carolina:** Robin Tolleson; **Philadelphia:** David Adler, Shaun Brady, Eric Fine; **San Francisco:** Mars Breslow, Forrest Bryant, Clayton Call, Yoshi Kato; **Seattle:** Paul de Barros; **Tampa Bay:** Philip Booth; **Washington, D.C.:** Willard Jenkins, John Murph, Bill Shoemaker, Michael Wilderman; **Belgium:** Jos Knaepen; **Canada:** Greg Buium, James Hale, Diane Moon; **Denmark:** Jan Persson; **France:** Jean Szlamowicz; **Germany:** Detlev Schilke, Hyou Vielz; **Great Britain:** Brian Priestley; **Israel:** Barry Davis; **Japan:** Kiyoshi Koyama; **Netherlands:** Jaap Lüdeker; **Portugal:** Antonio Rubio; **Romania:** Virgil Mihailu; **Russia:** Cyril Moshkow; **South Africa:** Don Albert.

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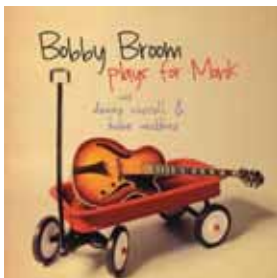
26 Medeski Martin & Wood
Making Every Gig Count // By Jennifer Odell

Coming off a seven-plus-year stint under Blue Note's wing, Medeski Martin & Wood have formed their own label, Indirecto. Bucking the entrenched pattern of making a CD and then touring in support of it, their goal now is to focus on composing a large amount of music, a process that nourishes their growth as a band more than the act of recording ultimately does. MMW take the new material out on the road first and let it develop and mature *before* entering the studio. In doing so, the travel-loving trio have made a triumphant return to their "homeless" roots.

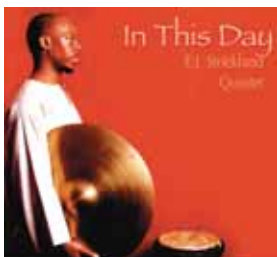
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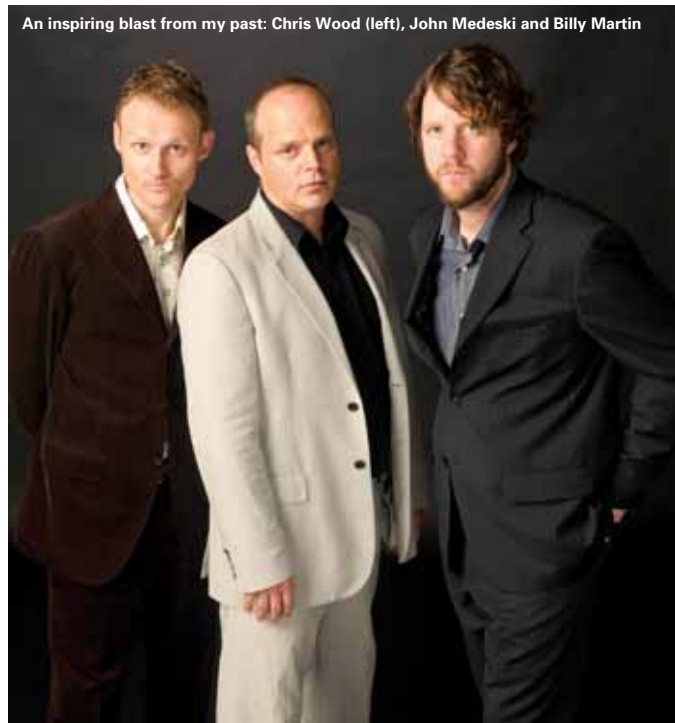
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Take 2!

John Medeski, Billy Martin and Chris Wood blew my mind when I first met them for an interview, as editor of *DownBeat*, back in late 1996. Beyond the actual “work” that was the purpose of our get-together, the most memorable part of my encounter with the trio was the way they turned me on to so many new things in just one night.

They fed me huge amounts of fresh sushi—something I had never eaten before in my life—and made sure I knew which fish was which, explaining why I might like each one and then requesting an honest review of every delicate piece I sampled, in between sips of green tea. After dinner, they invited me to join them in their tour bus to partake in a different kind of community ritual, one that involved ingesting a delicacy of sorts delivered from an undisclosed location in the U.S. Northwest. Then, in a sublime state of heightened awareness and borderline psychedelia, Medeski Martin & Wood sat me down by the stereo and played for me cuts from their favorite CDs, which they always carried on the road in big, fat travel cases (these were the days before mp3s). I’ll never forget the urgency in Medeski’s voice each time he mentioned an album or artist I hadn’t heard before: “Right away, right away!” he would insist, flipping a fresh disc into the tray in no time flat, eager to see the expressions on my face once the music began to play, challenging me to express my opinion on every track like some kind of impromptu Blindfold Test. Some of the music was rare stuff, completely foreign to my ears; other tracks were more familiar, or at least included musicians I’d heard of, even if they were in set-

An inspiring blast from my past: Chris Wood (left), John Medeski and Billy Martin



MICHAEL WEINTROB

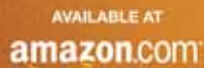
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tings to which I was unaccustomed (the Duke Ellington–Charles Mingus–Max Roach trio album *Money Jungle* comes to mind). They had invited me into their world and made me a part of their never-ending road trip, just for a day, and I had obliged without hesitation. The finer details of this mind-expanding experience remain a bit foggy, but of one thing I'm certain: I emerged from their tour bus a changed man—even though I was really still just a 29-year-old boy with a cool job.

I left that job a few years later when I decided to strike out on my own as a professional musician. I felt driven to pursue my potential to the fullest and to see just how far my musical talents could take me. So I embraced the unknown and hit the road with my baritone sax, working my way through various bands and performing regularly with jazz, blues and rock artists who needed a reliable player who could read *and* improvise. I spent a full 10 years as a freelance musician and freelance writer, and during that time I thought often of my hang with Medeski Martin & Wood and the exhilaration that their never-ending travels and always unpredictable live shows inspired in me.

I now return to the editor's chair with a sense of instant belonging, just as I felt when I first ventured inside MMW's modest home on wheels in search of a story. For me, as I re-enter the fold of DownBeat, their appearance on this month's cover is a perfect choice (see Jennifer Odell's article starting on Page 26). Working every day with the magazine's staff and freelance writers is like being part of an extended family—and I happily reclaim my place at a table where fine jazz journalism is always the main course and the camaraderie of peers creates an enduring sense of community.

I can't help but be reminded of the community atmosphere depicted in this month's feature article on tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson, who turned 80 earlier this year. It was at his nightclub, located not far from where I grew up on the South Side of Chicago, that I first learned to appreciate cats who play avant-garde jazz. After spending entire days star-struck at the Chicago Jazz Festival, I would hit the Velvet Lounge late-night to hear Anderson, Edward "Kidd" Jordan and an entire parade of AACM-schooled instrumentalists blow their hearts out with complete freedom and conviction. Our coverage of Anderson's birthday bash, by writer/photographer Michael Jackson, begins on Page 48.

In the recording studio, there is something special about first takes that is impossible to replicate on subsequent attempts at the same song. You can never recapture the magic of such moments; the glory of creating something new and struggling bravely through it often renders first takes as keepers. But there is something to be said about second takes, as well, especially if you've paid attention and learned something about yourself and your ensemble the first go-round. Pianist Lynne Arriale, another artist featured prominently in this issue, is fond of doing multiple takes in the studio with the stated goal of taking a completely new approach to the composition each time. The story of Arriale's latest ambitious project, a bold break from the strict trio format she has stuck with for years, begins on Page 32.

And so begins my own second take, as I resume my former job responsibilities and reacquaint myself with familiar faces while embracing a brand new world of modern art and advanced communication. Like Medeski Martin & Wood, who have returned to their self-described "homeless" roots with their latest series of CDs, I have come to the conclusion that now is the time to get back to where I once belonged, where I do my best work and where others consistently hold me to high standards.

In the recording studio, with the clock always running, second takes are a true luxury. The same is true, I've learned, in life itself. Things have a way of eventually coming full circle, and I have been fortunate enough to recognize this opportunity to reunite with people and places that bring out the absolute best in me. I am, indeed, the luckiest.

It's good to be home again. And I am prepared, once again, to be blown away.

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75th Marks A True Milestone

With all the talk of the demise of print media, let's not forget that the making of a good magazine is an art. The 75th anniversary issue is a great example. DownBeat staffers should be proud of this achievement: masterful magazine-making! But where's the article about the vibrant Swiss jazz scene? Probing artists, the challenges facing the historically important Willisau festival, innovative jazz schools—it's all here. Come and find out!

Scott Sandel
Gunzwil, Switzerland

I thoroughly enjoyed reading every article in the 75th anniversary issue, and agreed with everything. Starting with the cover: collector's edition. Congratulations on not just a great issue, but for keeping it going for more than 75 years.

Danny Scher
Kensington, Calif.

I have been coming close in the last year or so to canceling my DownBeat subscription. Maybe it's my aging nature, but the new focus in jazz just doesn't appeal to me as much as the artists I have loved in the past. Well, you have delayed my cancelation with the 75th anniversary collector's edition. That was a great read. Reading my hero Mel Tormé's article and seeing the



covers with him and another hero, Rosemary Clooney, was like a breath of fresh air. So thank you for that edition. My old bones appreciate it!

Gerry Brown
Columbus, Ohio

In light of your 75th anniversary issue and the Living Legends articles, wouldn't it have been appropriate to include the seriously neglected contributions of Ahmad Jamal?

Dale Funtash
dalehimself@yahoo.com

Research Question—Lem Winchester

I am writing a biography of the late Wilmington, Del., vibraphone player Lem Winchester. I would like to interview anyone who knew or played with him, heard him play, or has any photos of him or the jazz clubs where he performed. I am especially looking for information about his 1958 appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival, his accidental death in 1961 at the Topper Club in Indianapolis and his appearance at the Birmingham Jazz Festival in Michigan.

Scott Davidson
scodavdrum@aol.com

About Time For Pettiford, Dameron

It is inconceivable and unbelievable that DownBeat had to wait 57 years to honor Oscar Pettiford with an induction into the DownBeat Hall of Fame ("Critics Poll," August '09). Tadd Dameron is also more than deserving. Thank you, DownBeat, for establishing the veterans' committee. I am

looking forward to seeing Don Byas, Chu Berry, Sonny Stitt, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and other deserving legends in the Hall of Fame. And congratulations to Hank Jones for being voted in.

Jimmie Jones
Bettendorf, Iowa

Where's Al Cohn?

I represent the Al Cohn Jazz Society headquartered at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania, which was also Al Cohn's hometown. It is a major oversight that Al is not in your Hall of Fame. Not only was Al Cohn a superlative soloist, but he was also a superb section player, composer and arranger throughout a career that spanned nearly four decades. His absence from your Hall of Fame is a shortcoming that needs to be addressed.

Edwin Bowers
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Have a chord or discord? E-mail us at editor@downbeat.com.

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White House Jam

First Lady Michelle Obama welcomes jazz musicians, students as arts education funding takes on new urgency

As First Lady Michelle Obama concluded her four-minute speech about the significance of jazz in the East Room of the White House on June 15, she gave a knowing nod to her daughters, Malia and Sasha, as they sat next to their grandmother. "I want to keep them alive and aware of all kinds of music other than hip-hop," Obama said.

"It so important that you are here," the First Lady continued, as she welcomed the 150 students from Washington, D.C., New Orleans and New York City performance schools to the kickoff of the White House Music Series. "So I brought them here as well." Then she recalled her own childhood in Chicago, where her grandfather used to play jazz in the house nearly 24 hours a day.

"Jazz has been a part of life since I was a little girl," Obama said. "Before there were room-to-room speakers, my grandfather had a speaker in every room in the house and played jazz at the highest volume that he could. That's how I grew up in my household."

Launched in the middle of Black Music Month, the series' one-time "jazz studios" were coordinated in partnership with the White House by Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. Later in the year, the White House will continue its Music Series by focusing on classical and country music.

An hour prior to Obama's speech, the stately rooms of the East Wing blared with sounds of young jazz hopefuls honing their crafts. The wing was transformed into four separate music clinics—"American History and Jazz," "Syntax of Jazz," "The Blues and Jazz" and "Duke Ellington and Swing"—as students gleaned technical and anecdotal advice from the Marsalis family (Wynton, Branford, Ellis, Dafeayo and Jason), members of Jazz at Lincoln Center



Michelle Obama and Zach Brown

ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO BY CHARLES DHAARPAK

Orchestra and Paquito D'Rivera.

In the East Room, the Marsalises, along with reedman D'Rivera and bassist Eric Revis, held court as they taught "The Blues and Jazz," with Wynton and Ellis doing most of talking.

"I always say, 'Put your hard hat on when you start playing jazz,' because it takes stamina and dedication to really do this work properly," Ellis said. Picking up on his father's avuncular demeanor, Wynton advised youngsters, "Never slink off looking mad at yourself after your solo."

As the clinic progressed, Wynton invited students to join the band on stage and improvise eight bars during a blues number. "When you play a chorus, I want you to concentrate on feeling where you are at that time," he said, before the band engaged in a swaggering mid-tempo piece that lured a parade of students to step up and show off their talents.

Ivan Rosenberg, a 17-year-old trumpeter from LaGuardia Arts High School in New York, was one of those who dared to take the stage; he even traded some high-register blasts with Wynton.

"Playing here is crazy—I couldn't have imagined doing something like this," Rosenberg said. "I was definitely nervous about being in the

White House, but Wynton made it very comfortable for people to come up on stage and just express themselves."

Ever since President Barack Obama revealed that his iPod contained Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Charlie Parker tracks, the American jazz scene has set hopes high that his endorsement will help boost jazz's audience and economic well being. It's an uphill battle. On the same day as the White House event, the National Endowment for the Arts published *Arts Participation: Highlights from a National Survey*, which revealed declining audience numbers for all performing arts, including jazz, ballet, classical music and museum attendance.

While some critics say that repairing the global economy takes higher priority than supporting the arts, Kyle Wedberg, interim president of New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, cited the importance of the arts in education.

"It's in the arts is where you bring those things together—thinking about building a stage set, thinking about sound design, thinking about music scores," Wedberg said. "Those rhythms that Wynton was teaching at the beginning about 6/4, 3/4, 4/4 swing—that's math. Those are the integrative steps of the arts. We need more of that, not less, in this country." —John Murph

Riffs



Production Talk: Producer Tommy LiPuma (left) and writer Ashley Kahn took part in the Recording Academy New York Chapter's Up Close Personal conversation series on June 25. Kahn interviewed LiPuma onstage about the producer's history. **Details:** grammy.com

Wein Returns: After the JVC Jazz Festival cancelled its annual New York summer event this year, producer George Wein announced that he will be bringing the festival back to New York next year. Wein announced on July 7 that the medical technology company CareFusion will sponsor the CareFusion New York Jazz Festival in June 2010. The company currently sponsors his festival in Newport, R.I. **Details:** carefusionjazz.com

Retold Tales: Singer Kate Schutt has taken a novel path for her new disc, *The Telephone Game* (ArtistShare). She solicited love stories from contributors, which serve as the model for her compositions. **Details:** artistsshare.com

Jamerson's Memory Honored: Bass legend James Jamerson will be inducted into Fender Guitars' Fender Hall of Fame at a ceremony on Aug. 7 at the Tempe Center for the Arts in Tempe, Ariz. **Details:** fender.com

Tosoff Win: Pianist Amanda Tosoff's quartet received the General Motors Grand Jazz Award at this year's Montreal International Jazz Festival. **Details:** montrealjazzfest.com

RIP, Len Dobbin: The Montreal-based jazz journalist died of a stroke on July 8. He was 74. As a longtime writer for the Montreal Gazette and local broadcaster, he was particularly supportive of his city's jazz scene and passed away during a jazz concert at the festival he championed.

Backstage With ...

By Ken Micallef

When Jacky Terrasson opened his set at New York's Iridium on June 25, a solo of contrarian ideas—from fluttering romanticism to dissonant, pounding single notes to lilting swing—proved his resourceful imagination and keyboard agility. And after the brief improvised introduction, Terrasson revealed the unmistakable melody of "Beat It."

"It was more like a moaning thing, a lament," said Terrasson who was joined by drummer Jamire Williams and bassist Ben Williams. "It was this vamp around the melody and eventually we got into this more groovy thing. I decided to just do it that day, after we heard about Michael Jackson's death during sound check."

Are you embracing r&b and hip-hop on your upcoming Concord release?

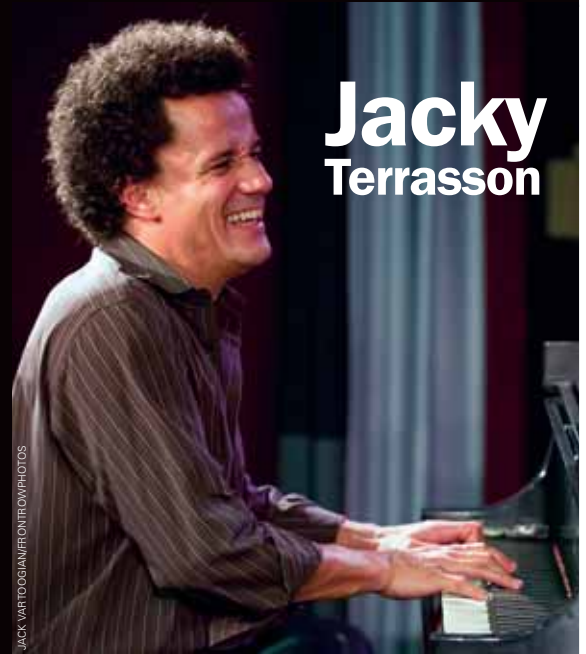
Yeah, and just staying open. Jamire and Ben are listening to that music more than me. I am just letting them bring anything they want to the bandstand. It's really about how we all react. All ingredients are welcome. It makes it fun—that's the thing.

Is the new material melodically similar to your past recordings but rhythmically closer to hip-hop?

A little less jazz, and a little more of what's going on these days. Hip-hop and all the beats you hear in clubs. Melody and rhythm have always been important for me.

What else has contributed to your evolution since your previous disc, *Mirror*, in 2007?

I've been listening to a lot of Bach—*The Well Tempered Clavier*—enjoying myself away from jazz. I like the structure of Bach. It makes so much sense. It's so logical. It's wonderful to practice, great for fingers, for memory, for discipline, and it's musically beautiful. And I'm more involved with my own composing, moving away from standards. I try to listen to ethnic music, like Japanese flutes or African drums, music you don't hear every day. It's refreshing. I don't like what's playing on the radio that



much. I'm still a fanatic about Keith Jarrett's '70s and '80s music—I love what he did with Dewey Redman and his trio stuff before it got too polished. There was a time when he was reaching out so much, it was beautiful.

How long have Ben and Jamire Williams been with you?

About two years off and on. Jamire was highly recommended by Eric Harland, my former drummer. I took out Jamire, and sure enough, he was coming straight out of Eric Harland's bag, but he had his own little edge and lots of energy. And a lot of fluidity. I love that about his drumming, this idea of movement. Then I asked Jamire who he wanted on bass, and he suggested Ben. They hooked up automatically and it felt natural. I was blown away at our first rehearsal in March preparing for a European tour. Ben sight-read the music like he'd been playing it forever, like the tour was already done. He is a gifted and soulful player.

Is there a general theme or musical concept for your upcoming album?

It's gonna be groovier, maybe less of a jazz record. It's still based on jazz, with the elements of swing, interaction, improvisation. But the music will be more groove-oriented, perhaps punchier. And I will do some covers—I love to pick a tune and use it as an excuse to have fun. Like "Beat It." **DB**

AARON COHEN



Jimmy Scott and James Moody

Jimmy Scott Returns to the Studio

Now 84, and after having semi-retired, Jimmy Scott recently returned to recording.

"I've laid back and this just came to us, so I decided to do it," Scott said. "You never give up, baby, you have to keep believing. This record can open some doors for me."

At the end of June, the singer began laying down tracks with an all-star group at Los Angeles' Westlake Recording Studios. Ralf Kemper, of the German-based Kemper Music Group, is producing the disc and funding a documentary about the project. The disc will be a mix of standards and new compositions. Kemper is currently seeking a label to release the album. Guest musicians include saxophonist James Moody, pianist Kenny Barron and guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves.

"What Jimmy has to offer is definitely Jimmy's," Castro-Neves said. When you hear him, you know immediately. Especially in this age when so many people sound alike."

"This record will be cool," Moody added. "With Kenny and Jimmy you can't go wrong, especially since me and Jimmy have 168 years put together." —Aaron Cohen



EARL GIBSON

Playboy Jazz Heats Up L.A.

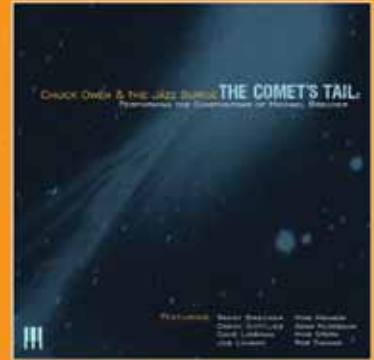
Wallace Roney (above) helped usher in the Playboy Jazz Festival, which ran on June 13-14 at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. As Bill Cosby returned for his traditional role as emcee, other performers included Jimmy Cobb, Wayne Shorter and The Neville Brothers.

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New York's Loft Scene, Irrepressible Founder Cheered at Celebration for Jazz Forum

Though the Jazz Forum operated for only four years at the tail of New York City's loft scene, closing finally in 1983, it is still remembered as an incubator for then-young musicians and reliable stomping ground for veterans looking for new audiences. Its story, and legacy, is tied to proprietor Mark Morganelli, an irrepressible horn player who has continued to produce live jazz in venues big and small throughout the Northeast under the auspices of his non-profit organization, Jazz Forum Arts. On June 22, Morganelli hosted Jazz Forum @ 30: A Celebration at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Hall. The concert featured a number of jazz luminaries, including Joe Lovano, John Scofield, Lou Donaldson and Jon Hendricks.

"Mark respects this music because he plays it himself and knows its history," Donaldson said. "There are few concert producers out there like him. He sets things up so every gig is special, like he'd want it for himself. That's why he's still around, and believe me, jazz needs more people like him."

The concert was also meant to recall the loose atmosphere at Morganelli's loft, where mix-and-match jamming and post-bop styles were the normal fare. Three masterful pianists—Barry Harris, Cedar Walton and Kenny Barron—also recalled Jazz Forum's emphasis on piano trios.

Harris opened the show with bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Leroy Williams. He issued a few ruminations on different tunes until landing on "Like Someone In Love." When Donaldson arrived onstage, the music jumped. After looking back on soul jazz with his signature "Blues Walk" and then returning to bebop roots with Denzil Best's jittery "We," the saxophonist rambled through a slightly amusing blues called "Whiskey Drinking Woman." Cedar Walton, playing with Drummond and drummer Louis Hayes, was brilliant, and his two trio tunes, starting with "Time After Time," contrasted unfavorably with his collaboration with tenor saxophonist George Coleman, which never caught ignition. In the concert's second half Kenny Barron led the final trio with Rufus Reid and Jimmy Cobb on a single tune before Paquito D'Rivera and Claudio Roditi, playing clarinet and flugelhorn respectively, commanded the spotlight.

Even more variety and energy abounded later in the night. Vocalese pioneer Jon Hendricks brought out his own backing quartet and affirmed his bossa nova predilections with his superb whistle taking the place of a flute solo. Aria Hendricks, Jon's daughter, and Kevin Burke came onstage for three percolations of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross favorites.

"You had every type of jazz musician there,



Jon Hendricks

JACK VARTOOGIAN/FROMPHOTOS

and from every age group," Jon Hendricks said. "Some of the musicians who played, I hadn't seen in over ten years, like Louis Hayes. We were having a lot of fun, and the audience appreciated that."

With so many great musicians on hand, the predictable finale of Jazz Forum @ 30 was an all-star jam, ostensibly based on Dizzy Gillespie's "Ow," and, fittingly, Morganelli was given a few solo turns on flugelhorn.

—Thomas Staudter

Los Angeles Jazz Collective Builds, Unites Southern California Scene

Trumpeter Brian Swartz moved to Los Angeles from San Francisco in 1988, and, like in the Bay Area, he said he wanted to be a part of a jazz community, though found that L.A. is "so spread out that it's hard to feel that." Until he began working with saxophonist Matt Otto.

Otto is a prime mover in the Los Angeles Jazz Collective (LAJC), a loose-knit organization whose mutual respect isn't built on stylistic vision so much as shared goals.

"The Collective gives me that sense of community," Swartz said.

The LAJC, which began in 2007, has 13 core members and a growing list of "associates." With a half-dozen festivals under its belt and a new CD, *Sampler Vol. 1*, available through its web site (lajazzcollective.com), the group has begun making strides toward recognition.

Otto looked to New York trombonist Alan Ferber, who started the Brooklyn Jazz Underground, for a template. The saxophonist's next step was connecting with like-minded local musicians. He'd worked with pianist Gary Fukushima, who had overseen a weekly jam session at 2nd St. Jazz in Little Tokyo, and found they had similar organizational ideas. "Gary and I wanted to have a collective that



Top row: Josh Welchez (left), Mike Scott, Gary Fukushima, Matt Otto, Brian Swartz, Joe Bagg and Steve Cotter. Bottom row: Robby Marshall (left), Matt Zebley, Ryan McGillicuddy, Damon Zick, Jamie Rosenn and Jason Harnell

DIANE ARELLANO

was more open so people could come and go," Otto said.

Fukushima had his own reasons for seeking collaboration.

"It's hard for jazz musicians to get their own music played," Fukushima said. "My priority was based on the lack of opportunity to play meaningful jazz."

The pianist's instincts also drew him to Otto. "Matt and I agreed that we could probably

accomplish more as artists if we combined forces," Fukushima said. "We wanted to be better able to do certain things: hire a publicist, press CDs, take out ads, print up cards."

Members of the LAJC contend its festivals are its greatest successes.

"The first night at the Pasadena Jazz Institute was standing room only," said bassist Ryan McGillicuddy. "It's just so gratifying to have a packed house to hear our music." —Kirk Silsbee

The QUESTION Is ...

By Dan Ouellette

Should jazz be distanced from being tagged "America's classical music"?

According to the recent National Endowment of the Arts study, *Arts Participation 2008: Highlights From a National Survey*, audiences for jazz have been seriously dwindling. The study linked jazz with classical music as performing arts whose attendance had declined the most. Given the alarming stats, should jazz be distanced from being tagged "America's classical music" because of an audience perception problem?

Vocalist Sachal Vasandani: Jazz is not antiquated. Jazz is of this time, now. For all its nuances, jazz can be as powerfully simple as any other music, and the adrenaline stream that young people crave flows through it. I'm a jazz musician. My first responsibility is to synthesize my inspiration and discipline into work that is honest to my experience. That honesty may not inspire everyone, but I will have at least shared a singular, personal truth. Long after any one artist is gone, the responsibility—and fate—of jazz listenership will continue to lie with the general community. The leaders of education, marketing and communication can brand this music as enjoyable and relevant, until the collective consciousness embraces it. If people receive this message from a young age, frequently, then the audience for jazz will rise.



Keyboardist John Beasley: In 1982, contemporary bands were Weather Report, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea. This new fusion music was forward-looking, drawing a broader audience, even rock, because of its contemporary rhythms. It was inclusive. And you could take a date to a show and even dance. In 2008, that same 30-year-old is now 55 and married, maybe has kids in college, less time to go out to hear music. Plus, since the '90s, a lot of mainstream high-profile jazz concerts started [taking place] in concert venues along with classical music that had subscription series. Young people can't afford subscription series, nor the individual concert prices. Also, at these venues you sit and listen, not participate. The formality of the setting can distance you from the music and the experience. If you describe jazz in the same sentence as "classical," then the connotation becomes elitist, formal, older audience, special occasion dates—you sit stiffly, cross your legs and listen ... my parents' music.

Take jazz out of the museum and bring it back to the streets, where it's accessible, open to all, casual, with curious, ready-to-explore, discover-new-music audiences and where people feel free to respond ... and dance to it—all of what it feels like being young.

Bassist John Lee: When I played with Dizzy Gillespie, he'd tell the crowd that jazz was America's classical music. I don't think that's misleading. But to some people it could sound stale, old. To most lay people, jazz can mean anything from Kenny G to Cecil Taylor, and a lot of people have *Kind Of Blue* or another milestone album. So it wouldn't hurt to come up with a new model to describe jazz that keeps in mind that musicians are doing different things, from staying in the parameters to fusing with African or Brazilian music.



Pianist Ramsey Lewis: I believe the people who started calling jazz classical music were looking for respect—that it was not just for smoky clubs, but could be performed at Carnegie Hall. Then with budget cuts, music was gone from the public schools, which had educated students on classical as well as jazz. So jazz ended up being supported by the wealthy people in the suburbs. At a certain point in jazz, a lot of musicians felt they didn't have to communicate with the audience. That has to change. The Chicago Symphony has preconcert lectures. Why not jazz? An

afternoon workshop or lecture or master class—and not just for music students but for average people so they can ask questions. **DB**

Got an opinion of your own on "The Question"? E-mail us: thequestion@downbeat.com.



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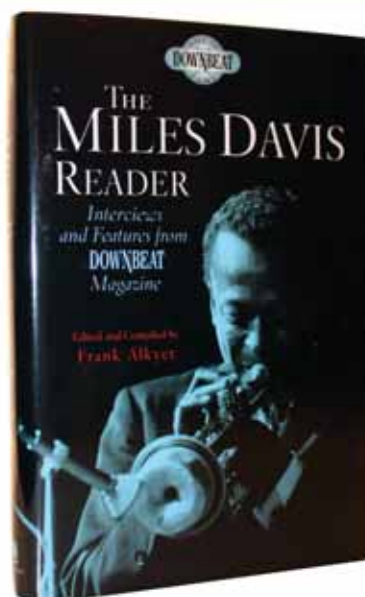
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McPartland Celebrates 30 Years of "Piano Jazz"

Change is afoot at "Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz," the pianist's interview and performance National Public Radio show, which celebrated its 30th anniversary with a gala at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in New York on April 14.

Earlier this year, McPartland began inviting occasional guest hosts to add to the cache of nearly 700 shows she has already created. In a big switch in June, McPartland traded places with Elvis Costello, as he guest-hosted an interview with McPartland herself (air date to be announced). Costello also guest-hosted a segment with Allen Toussaint. Other guest hosts have so far included Bill Charlap, pianist Jon Weber and singer/pianist Daryl Sherman.

"Marian McPartland has set the bar very high," Charlap said. "As an interviewer, Marian always is completely honest, all the time. And she's incredibly versatile as a musician and able to play and converse with anyone. It has to do with loving the music so much and enjoying the people who make the music that it's been such a special, intimate show."

McPartland, 91, plagued by arthritis to the point she can no longer reach the piano unassisted, cheerfully celebrated the launch of the fourth decade of the show, which originates from Columbia, S.C.'s ETV Radio.

A pantheon of piano powerhouses assembled at Dizzy's to sing her praises and toast the longevity, popularity and quality of the show. Resplendent in a silver brocade jacket over a pink top, McPartland emerged toward the end of the first set, after a dazzling revue that included Bill Charlap, Rene Rosnes, Grady Tate, Joanne Brackeen, Taylor Eigsti, Randy Weston and Kurt Elling.

"I've been doing this for 30 years," McPartland said, then added with her well-timed wit, "Dammit!"

—Paul de Barros

By John Corbett

Dick Wetmore Dick Wetmore (BETHLEHEM, 1954)



The decision to purchase this '50s Bethlehem 10-inch—in great shape with a beautiful, high-contrast Burt Goldblatt photograph and cover design—was a no-brainer. But it took me a while to get around to listening to it. When I did, the sound sent me back to the cover for information. I'd heard these tunes before (some, at least), and they were fascinating, quite modernistic, not at all the trad fare I'd been expecting. One name in the notes set me straight, appearing boldly along with the musicians rather than buried in post-song-title parentheses: Bob Zieff, credited with compositions and arrangements.



Zieff is the adventurous and unsung hero to emerge from the Boston vanguard jazz bohemia. Though he's spent the period from the '60s forward teaching around the United States, Zieff is best known for the compositions and arrangements performed by Chet Baker in the mid-'50s, when the young composer had moved from Boston to New York. Indeed, with the exception of a session with Anthony Ortega, Zieff's discography is clustered around recordings, live and studio, made by Baker. Part of what makes the Zieff-Baker tracks so essential for their fans is the piano playing of Richard Twardzik. Twardzik was a visionary musician and composer, one of a few at the time who were taking the complexity of bebop harmony seriously in the context of early 20th century classical music. A prodigious student of Zieff's, Twardzik was supposed to be on this date, but the same thing that kept him from the recordings—heroin—is what killed him at the terribly premature age of 24.

His replacement, Ray Santisi, plays nicely, perhaps without the ferocious austerity and insight that Twardzik brought to these pieces, but with a like-minded sense of restraint. Drummer Jimmy Zitano is deft

and supportive, while Bill Nordstrom's bass alternates between swinging along with Zitano and engaging more contrapuntally with Wetmore, whose violin playing is lovely and playful, sometimes adding little bluesy flashes, sometimes pulling out the weirder aspects of the tunes with glisses and slurs. It's not everyday you hear modern jazz performed by a

violin-led quartet, but in this case, with the pronounced orientation towards new classical music, it makes perfect sense.

One of the joys of this music is that it so thoroughly synthesizes its components. Rather than jamming them together, as more ham-fisted third-stream music does, it takes

ideas from classical and jazz and looks for commonalities, threading one through the other. At the opening of "Just Duo," one of the most beguiling pieces, Nordstrom (playing arco) and Wetmore commence as the title suggests, Bartok infusions breaking open into Wetmore's splendid solo over gently rocking rhythm. Zieff's compositions take unexpected turns as a matter of course, and they're often unusually structured. "Sad Walk" is a fave from Baker days, along with the slightly evil "Brash," which Swedish baritone saxophonist Lars Gullin recorded with Baker, and the deceptively sweet "Rondette." Only "Shiffful" never made the transition to the Baker book, perhaps due to the complexity of its form.

Wetmore died in 2007. Zieff is still alive, deserving more attention than he's gotten. (Read Jack Chambers' great essay on him, "Revenge of the Underground Composer," available online at langtech.dickinson.edu/Sirena/Issue2/Chambers.pdf) No doubt it's time to add another line to the abbreviated in-print column of Zieff recordings, but until then this will remain for Freaks only. **DB**

E-mail the Vinyl Freak: vinylfreak@downbeat.com

More than 60 years separate the first jazz recording in 1917 and the introduction of the CD in the early '80s. In this column, DB's Vinyl Freak unearths some of the musical gems made during this time that have yet to be reissued on CD.



Catalan Days Event Brings Barcelona to New York

If American jazz audiences won't come to you, you must go to them. If they don't know who you are, you bring the show Stateside and give them a revelatory experience.

That sums up the strategy for exposure by the talented jazz world that exists outside the too-often insulated jazz realm in the United States. This proved to be a brilliant plan by Italians in recent years, most notably the maestros behind the Umbria Jazz Festival. As a result, Italian artists including trumpeter Enrico Rava, pianists Danilo Rea and Stefano Bollani, and saxophonist Francesco Cafiso opened ears here to the country's sophisticated embrace of jazz.

That same approach informed the Barcelona Nights showcase at the Jazz Standard in New York, May 13–17, as a part of the month-long Catalan Days cultural festival. With the Barcelona Jazz Festival setting the plate for the Jazz Standard fare, audiences had the rare opportunity to sample a diversity of jazz expression that exists today in the Catalan region of Spain. It marked the first time this focused representation of Barcelona's musical wealth was offered to American jazz fans.

One of Catalan's best-known artists, pianist Chano Domínguez, was featured with his quartet, and pianist Jordi Rossy (a.k.a. Jorge Rossy, former drummer for Brad Mehldau) played the keys in his trio, which also included his son, trumpeter Fèlix Rossy, and tenor saxophonist



Augustí Fernández

JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

Chris Cheek. Rising-star bassist Alexis Cuadrado—born in Barcelona and based in New York—led his Cuarteto Ibérico in a showcase of originals blended with his homeland's music, and Catalan master drummer Marc Miralta headlined with his trio comprising a pair of New Yorkers, pianist Aaron Goldberg and bassist Omer Avital.

For the first two evenings of Barcelona Nights, two bands relatively unknown in the U.S. were spotlighted, playing captivating music derived from polar opposites. The electric trio Triphasic, led by saxophonist Llibert Fortuny (also an electronics wiz on effects and the EWI) with a rhythm section of bassist Gary Wilis and drummer David Gómez, delivered a set of turbulent glee, rip-snorting drive, sharp-edged improvisation and contemporary angst. The funk-to-rock-to-blowing performance was compelling, infused with staccato sax beats,

spooky digital vocals, angular electric bass rhythms and hand-clapping grooves. Even while diving into the serrated depths of industrial rock, Triphasic also played with sly humor.

The following night, pianist Agustí Fernández led an acoustic trio of bassist Barry Guy and drummer Ramón López. The opening tune began as a blissful dream that gravitated into grit before emerging as a pastoral melody. Serenity and chaos blended organically as Fernández's melancholic single-note runs rushed into a tumble, Guy's pizzicato lines dramatically shifted to grumbled bowing and López's hushed flicks on the cymbals burst into solid punches. At the end of the trio's first set, a new tune, the lovely lullaby "Noninó," was contrasted by a short, fast, rowdy rendition of Marilyn Crispell's "Rounds," making for an impressive display of Barcelona variety.

—Dan Ouellette

Bassists Dig Deep for Peace in Israel



Jean Claude Jones (left), Barre Phillips, Bert Turetzky, Irina-Kalina Goudeva, Michael Klinghoffer, Chi Chi Nwanoku and Mark Dresser

FRANCOIS LAGARDE

Jerusalem-based bassist Jean Claude Jones and his Kadima Collective improvisational musicians' organization took on their region's violent tension in their own way. Last spring, they called in bassists from around the world to lend the Middle East some deep, calming vibes.

Deep Tones for Peace, co-sponsored by the American Embassy in Tel Aviv and the local British Council and French Consulate, took place simultaneously at Jerusalem's The Lab venue and at the CUE Art Foundation on New York's W. 25th Street on April 26. Bassists flew in from all over the world, and from a range of disciplines. Artists included Mark Dresser, who orchestrated the on-stage activities in Jerusalem; Thierry Barbe, co-principal bass player with the Paris Opera Orchestra; French-based U.S. bassist Barre Phillips; Bert Turetzky from the U.S.; Bulgarian-born Irina-Kalina Goudeva from Denmark; and U.K.-based Chi Chi Nwanoku, who serves as Professor of Double Bass Historical Studies at the Royal Academy of

Music and Professor of Double Bass at Trinity Music College of Music in London. Local contributors included Jones and Michael Klinghoffer from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance.

Warm-up concerts were lined up for the week leading up to the Deep Tones bash. The first gig at the Yellow Submarine—which featured Dresser, Turetzky, Jones, Phillips and Goudeva—did not bode well for the main event. Isolated individual sparks of creative genius shimmered, but not much in the way of synergistic spirit, and the improvisational endeavor seemed a bit too ethereal. But an abundance of golden moments shone on the big day.

The telematics screened hook-up with five bassists on the other side of the ocean ran smoothly. Jones' meandering foray featured ferocious string and percussion expletives. Other highlights included a wonderful outing by Phillips and an ethnically seasoned spot by Goudeva with added vocal coloring. On the New York side, Phillips' son Dave played a celestial blues piece and Rufus Reid added

mainstream jazz to the artistic mix. Father and son Phillips produced a genre border-hopping trans-Atlantic effort.

Dresser had a generous amount of textural and temporal leeway at his disposal on the ensemble pieces. The relatively limited range of the acoustic bass notwithstanding, there was plenty of varied output in the players' combined efforts. While Barbe and Nwanoku put out some more groomed vibes, Turetzky, Jones and Phillips Sr. added the rougher edges. Meanwhile, Goudeva theatrics blended seamlessly with Dresser's more muscular contributions. The long gig was never short on the surprise element, and the ever-attentive players seemed as if they'd been working together for years. Some full ensemble pieces involved all 13 players, including a chart by William Parker that ran a gamut of dissonant strikes, multihued splashes, plodding passages and dark colors.

While Deep Tones for Peace may not have produced a panacea for the region's political ailments, the bassists succeeded in raising spirits for one evening.

—Barry Davis

Telluride Celebration Reflects Frisell's Eclecticism

Guitarist Bill Frisell spent his formative years in Colorado, so when he was featured as guest of honor at this year's Telluride Jazz Celebration (June 5–7), it served as his triumphant return to the Rocky Mountains.

Frisell's performances with violinist Eyvind Kang and drummer Rudy Royston were compelling for other reasons, as well. Their late-night show at Telluride's Sheridan Opera House was raucous and noisy, to the chagrin of listeners who expected Frisell's calmer tours of Americana. Those who stuck around were treated to zany sonic cartoons augmented by Frisell's signature arsenal of effects. Kang paid brief homage to Albert Ayler-era Michael Sampson while Royston squeezed polyrhythms out of everything around him. The trio's turn the next day in sun-drenched Town Park was more festival-friendly, displaying a commitment to a quieter form of interplay that provided an ideal soundtrack to the mountain backdrop. This was the laid-back Frisell who goes down easier with casual fans.

This year's Telluride Celebration was less straightforward than previous festivals. Saxophonist Donald Harrison did a fine job representing the hard bop school, but a variety of other jazz styles were more prevalent. Polyglot names included Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, Ozomatli, Lizz Wright and improvising rock guitarist Jimmy Herring, who surprised fans of more adventurous music by bringing along the versatile alto saxophonist Greg Osby.



A fierce performance came from trumpeter Christian Scott, whose exchanges with pianist Milton Fletcher and guitarist Matthew Stevens were fiery and mutually sympathetic. He also introduced a searing and thoughtful new composition, "Angola, Louisiana And The 13th Amendment."

The New Orleans' Rebirth Brass Band was a crowd pleaser. People danced and cheered to their ecstatic cacophony and bulldozing takes on "I'm Walkin'" and "Grazing In The Grass," even if members of the group complained of breathing problems at 8,700 feet.

Ultimately, Telluride reflected the eclecticism of the guest of honor himself, whose genre-proof sensibilities were present everywhere.

—Bret Saunders

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Chano Domínguez

New Flamenco Jazz Impressions

“It was the first depression of my life,” Chano Domínguez said of his first sojourn to New York City in 1993 at age 33. The pianist, who was working a lot at jazz clubs across Spain and beginning to establish a consequential reputation on the European circuit, took a two-month hiatus “to discover if I can play jazz in the right way.”

This past spring, Domínguez performed for the first time in a New York club, the Jazz Standard, where his Gitano quartet—singer Blas Córdoba, dancer-palmero Tomasito and percussionist Israel Suarez—climaxed a four-day festival intended to showcase the musical and gastronomic flavors of Barcelona, his current hometown. It’s the latest iteration of Domínguez’s obsession with conjuring improvisations, arrangements and compositions that graft the rhythms (alegrias, soleás, bulerías, tanguillos, rumba) and performance tropes of flamenco onto the melodic and harmonic strategies established by such modern jazz role models as Thelonious Monk, Bill Evans, Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock.

Sipping coffee in the penthouse lounge of his hotel during the week of the festival, Domínguez reflected on the New York of 16 years ago, searching for precise English words to articulate his thoughts.

“It was hard to see so many great musicians play small clubs for the door,” he said. “Nobody wants you for nothing! But I discovered that the jazz musician lets his mind fly. I was already playing with the flamenco people before I came to New York, but after being here I felt stronger to develop that music, and I made my first record. If I don’t come to New York, that record is different.”

On that 1993 recording, *Chano* (Nuba), Domínguez revealed himself an Andalusian soulmate to such jazz-obsessed sons of the Iberian diaspora as Paquito D’Rivera, Jerry Gonzalez and Danilo Pérez, each a key figure in mapping out the notion of idiomatic multilingualism that so many younger jazz musicians adopted as a default esthetic during the ’90s and early ’00s.

“I first heard Jerry in the ’80s, and I loved that mix,” noted Domínguez, who recorded with Gonzalez on *Oye Cómo Viene* (Nuba) in 2001 and with D’Rivera on the DVD *Quartier*



JACK WARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

Latin (Naxos). “When I went to Cuba in the late ’90s, I started to learn tumbao—Cuban styles. Now a lot of Cuban musicians are in Spain, and they quickly connect with flamenco. When the flamenco musicians play tango or rumba, it’s like a guaguanco or Cuban rumba.”

Recently, Domínguez wove Afro-Caribbean and flamenco strains into his rhythmic flow on *New Flamenco Sound* (Verve/Universal), which showcases his formidable ensemble writing, and *Acércate Más* (Nuba), on which he improvises on jazz and pan-Latin repertoire with the late Cuban conguero Miguel Diaz and bassist George Mraz. This summer, he was also preparing interpretations of art-songs by such Spanish composers as Isaac Albeniz and Federico Mompou for a new record, and scoring a theatrical history of flamenco musical with director Carlos Saura. His July itinerary included four concerts of original music with Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

The latter connection began in Madrid not long after that first recording, when the trumpeter, returning to his hotel after a concert, passed by the Café Central, where Domínguez was working, and approached the bandstand to sit in. “The next surprise came eight years later,” Domínguez recalled. “The phone rang. ‘It’s Wynton. I want you to write 20 minutes

of music for the orchestra.’ The first time I played with them, in 2003, it was hard, because in flamenco you play the notes differently than in jazz, *ta-tat-tat-tat-tat-ta* instead of *di-bow, di-bow, di-bow*. But the second time, two years ago, they understood completely.”

Growing up in Cádiz, Domínguez, a guitarist from age 8 who shifted to keyboards at 15, heard flamenco from the womb.

“Flamenco is in my body,” he said. “I don’t think about it, I just do it. My father played flamenco records every day, and you can hear people clapping and singing in the street—as normal as napping! When I made that record in ’92, I thought, ‘Both the jazz musicians and flamenco musicians are going to kill me.’ But the flamenco people accepted me. I am an emotional player, a street musician, and I play piano in their home language, the language of the guitar.”

“Superficially, flamenco and jazz are different, but at the core they’re similar. Both come from the culture of people who have a hard life. Jazz starts with black people, with the blues, the intention to express your happiness and your sadness—and flamenco is the same. But jazz is central to me. It pulls together many different cultures, and allows them to think in the same direction.”

—Ted Panken

Will Sellenraad Modern Groove Harmony

Guitarist Will Sellenraad said organ combos provided his gateway to jazz. While he acknowledges Wes Montgomery, Grant Green and Kenny Burrell in particular, Sellenraad said the chitlin' circuit as a whole serves as a bridge between the past and present.

"Definitely, as far as guitar playing goes, you can't not be aware of that and try and play this music," Sellenraad said at his apartment in New York's SoHo neighborhood. "It connects the dots a little bit between a real straightforward jazz thing and blues. For guitar players, we all spend time with the blues."

Still, Sellenraad distances himself from any retro crowd as he incorporates modern harmony into his blues base. His third album, *Balance* (Beez Wax), conveys the flavor of soul jazz without the presence of an organ.

"I was feeling a little typecast after *Star Hustler* came out," he said of an earlier organ trio date. So Sellenraad made an adjustment. Tracks like the title song and "Stubbs" feature bluesy grooves, but the influence of Miles Davis and Wayne Shorter provides the underpinning. Sellenraad also focused on writing songs rather than sophisticated compositions.

"People are playing some hard, hard music out here," he said. "So a lot of times, they're

missing the feel of what it's really supposed to be. Because it's so complex, it's like you're so worried about trying to play it right that you don't worry about dynamics, your touch on your instrument and the vibe of the thing. To me, those are the most important things.

"So the trick is to make it at least sound simple," he continued. "We're exposed to so much these days that the melody is lost. I've walked out of many a club saying I couldn't sing any of that."

Sellenraad, 38, grew up in SoHo, where he knew quite a few jazz musicians. But his decision to pursue a jazz career actually came after he left Manhattan to attend Goddard College in Vermont. Sellenraad transferred to the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, where he earned a degree in jazz performance in 1995. Sellenraad's first album, *Streams*, came out in 2000.

In a sense *Balance*, recorded in February 2007, represents a tribute to the Big Apple scene. It features musicians with whom Sellenraad has worked for many years around the city: drummer Victor Lewis, bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa, tenor saxophonist Abraham Burton. Sellenraad composed his seven compositions for the date for this group.



JON PERRY

"This is the most personal recording I've ever done," he said. "Almost everything on there is tailor-made for those guys. And then also to write something we could play on, that we're not looking head down at the chart, but something that is easy enough for us to get pretty quickly to that spot where we're improvising. I didn't want it to be like a real heady thing."
—Eric Fine



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— JAZZ TIMES



Eivind Opsvik Nordic Grit Meets Neil Young

Although his native land offers some of the most generous support for the arts anywhere in the world, Norwegian bassist Eivind Opsvik has not only toughed it out in New York since 1998, but he's gradually installed himself as one of the city's most valuable, if overlooked, musicians. His flexibility and strength have made him a first-call choice in Brooklyn's progressive circles, especially in groups led by pianists Kris Davis and Jesse Stacken, and saxophonists Tony Malaby and Dave Binney. Recently, though, it's his own music that's begun attracting attention.

Opsvik's quartet Overseas (with Malaby, pianist Jacob Sacks and drummer Kenny Wollesen) and his duo with guitarist Aaron Jennings (simply called Opsvik & Jennings) have established the bassist's originality as a composer and arranger. With these projects the emphasis is on ensemble play, rather than the energetic solos he brings to sideman work.

"I grew up, like anyone else my age, listening to rock groups like Pink Floyd and Deep Purple," Opsvik said. "When I was a teenager I spent a lot of my free time with a four-track tape recorder, playing all of the instruments and mak-



MICHELLE ARCILA

ing up my own songs. In a way what I'm doing now is kind of going back to that. In between I studied jazz and got more serious about the theory part of it. When you're a teenager you're more open-minded, you try out different things, and you don't think about theory and rules, so I've tried to get back to that mindset."

Over the course of three albums, Overseas has drifted further and further away from moody

post-bop roots to a beguiling hybrid that relies on the ability of its members to use shifting textures and kaleidoscopic colors to advance the leader's simple yet beautiful themes, some of which were inspired by minimal conceits.

"I try to make records that I would like to listen to myself, and I don't find myself listening to free jazz or modern jazz records," he said. "Sad to say, but true. If I want to listen to music

Ezra Weiss Beyond The Lookingglass

Children watching the Northwest Children's Theater's recent production of *Alice In Wonderland* in Portland, Ore., were treated to a version of the story in which the heroine's trip down the rabbit hole made her life not only curiously and curiously, but jazzier and jazzier. During this journey through Lewis Carroll's whimsical world, Alice meets a Mad Hatter who sings to a decidedly Thelonious Monk-like tune, a pair of playing cards who relay the Queen's messages over the "Giant Steps" chord progression and a trumpet-playing Caterpillar who speaks in a familiar rasp (even calling out, "Teo!" as his number fades out).

The show is the brainchild of pianist Ezra Weiss, who has been teaching and serving as musical director at the theater since moving to Portland after receiving his masters in jazz piano at Queens College in New York. At the time, Weiss admitted, he was "just trying to get hired somewhere doing anything in music at all," but the gig meshed well with his own experiences performing in musical theater as a child.

Growing up in Phoenix, Weiss was introduced to music via his father's extensive record collection, which eventually yielded everything

from Ray Charles to Carmen McRae to Cannonball Adderley. But it was show tunes that provided the initial entrée. "He had a lot of Broadway records," Weiss said, "and when I was a young kid I gravitated towards those the most because they had a story built in."

Storytelling continues to be an important element for Weiss in his own compositional efforts. Outside of the obvious examples of *Alice In Wonderland* and his follow-up project, an adaptation of Mo Willems' children's book *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* using Brazilian music, Weiss claims a narrative element throughout his own work. The tunes on his 2005 CD *Persephone* (Umoja) were all based around the myth of the Queen of the Underworld, and he even sees a rough storyline in his most recent disc, the self-released *Get Happy*, which is split between originals and standards.

"With any piece of music," Weiss said, "I like to have some sort of arc. It might be an unusual, William Faulkner, *The Sound And The Fury* type of arc, but it's still telling a story."

Unsurprisingly, then, lyrics have always proved important to Weiss' playing, even when tackling standards instrumentally.



DONNA KLEINMAN

"Knowing the lyric just makes it so much easier," Weiss said. "It tells you how to phrase it, what the song's about, where to put your pauses, and where to lean on the words. Otherwise, it's just playing notes."

To the same end, Weiss enjoys playing with vocalists. Unlike many artists who draw

I put on Neil Young or Morton Feldman, or something else. I'm just trying to capture some of that vibe in my own music, speaking to people's hearts more than their minds."

Indeed, the opener, "Neil," for example, was borne from Opsvik's desire to hijack one of the simple drum grooves he heard on Young's *Harvest*, and while that easy lope is recognizable, the plangent melody that glides over it and the terse pointillistic improvisations that try to scuttle it belong exclusively to Overseas.

Opsvik studied classical music at the Norwegian Music Academy in Oslo, playing jazz when he wasn't in class. By the time he'd decided to pursue further studies, in 1998, he chose New York, thinking back on a weeklong vacation he'd had there before he was seriously thinking about its jazz scene. He spent two years at the Manhattan School of Music, and when he finished in 2000 he decided to stick around.

He's also started releasing his music on his own imprint, the Loyal Label, which has released the third Overseas disc (*Overseas III*) and the third album by Opsvik & Jennings, *A Dream I Used to Remember*. In the coming months it will also release some records by guitarist Brandon Seabrook and the duo of reedist Jon Irabagon and drummer Mike Pride.

"Over the last 10 years I've probably sent out a hundred CDs to different labels trying to get them to go for it," he said. "I've had some luck with some labels [including Fresh Sound New Talent and Rune Grammofon] but I just thought it was time to do it myself, to have more control over it." —Peter Margasak

hard lines between instrumental and vocal jazz, Weiss integrates both, including singers on several of the tracks on *Get Happy*. "I've never really thought of it as a big divide," he said. "Jazz, in terms of popularity, is already small enough, yet we manage to divide it even further.

"A composition student recently asked me if we need any more tunes using traditional bebop harmony," he continued. "I don't write music because I see myself giving some sort of charity to the world. I write because it's fun. So if it's fun for you to write bebop heads, write bebop heads. If it's not, then don't. I think we sometimes take ourselves too seriously."

With *Alice In Wonderland*, the fun for Weiss came in pairing jazz legends with Carroll's well-known characters, whether assigning the narcoleptic Dormouse a Shirley Horn ballad or setting the time-obsessed March Hare against a variation of Ornette Coleman's "Congeniality."

"All my other CDs have been about trying to find my own voice as a composer, but this project, it's been the opposite—trying to find all these other people's voices. It's more like doing a puzzle than trying to express myself. It's nice to take a break from trying to get inside my own head." —Shaun Brady



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***MAKING EVERY
GIG COUNT***

By Jennifer Odell // Photos by Michael Weintrob



A strange type of amoeboid protozoa builds its skeleton on the outside, subverting biology to emerge as one of Earth's most artfully designed organisms. When these ocean-dwelling unicellular life forms die, their skeletons sink to the sea floor, contributing to a funky organic ooze that began to form millions of years ago.

The creatures, radiolarians, seem to grow inside out. But this approach to creation actually protects and nourishes their core. Their beauty is peripheral to their growth as a species.

It's in the same spirit that John Medeski, Billy Martin and Chris Wood have embarked on creating music for their new album series, aptly titled, "Radiolarians." Coming off a seven-plus-year stint under Blue Note's wing, Medeski Martin & Wood have formed their own label, Indirecto, bucking the entrenched pattern of making a CD and then touring in support of it. Their goal is to focus on composing a large amount of music, a process that nourishes their core growth as a band more than the act of recording ultimately does. Instead of keeping their patterns—in this case, musical compositions—on the inside until they have a product to sell, they take them out on the road first and let the material develop and mature before entering the studio.

In doing so, the trio have, in a sense, returned to their own protozoan roots.

"It had a lot to do with getting to get together

to write a lot of new music," says bassist Wood, recalling the impetus for the project, which this year saw the release of *Radiolarians I, II and III*. "It's hard with our lives, families, city life. Back in the old days in the East Village when we were all living there—John and I even had an apartment together—we would play together all the time and write new music. Part of the plan was to adopt a structure where we had to get in and create a whole bunch of new music."

The product of their work—a three disc series, plus an upcoming box set including remixes by DJ Logic and a DVD shot by the band—is esthetically beautiful, filled with challenging contrasts, new grooves, deep funk and out melodies. As Logic puts it, "They each play like they have four hands instead of two, so it ends up sounding like 16 hands," which makes for endlessly diverse uses of time, melody and harmony. Whether the highlight of a tune involves a series of tweaked Afro-Caribbean beats or an intensely distorted clavinet that comes off like a rock guitar solo, you could just as easily teach a theory seminar on the new music as you could throw down and dance to it.

But the process is nearly as important as the product for MMW, for whom it seems that the road, or maybe just the act of being in motion, is as much an unofficial fourth member as regular cohorts like Logic or guitarist John Scofield.

"[This approach] requires improvising and being in the moment and being open to changing things every night before we record it," Martin says, aiming his voice at a cellular speakerphone while driving the band from a rainy outdoor show at Richmond, Va.'s Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden to a gig in Baltimore. "That spirit of creating is much more alive than, say, making a record, playing the songs from the record and touring in the typical way that a lot of bands do."

When the trio formed in the early 1990s (a common bond being the centrifugal force of Bob Moses' percussion ideas), they initially gigged at spots like the Village Gate, Tonic and the Knitting Factory. Those early days were also a more fertile time for jazz in New York, with rooms that incubated a group of artists who could afford to live in Manhattan on a musician's wages, fostering a closer-knit scene than what exists in the city today.

They recorded an acoustic jazz album, *Notes From The Underground*, in 1992, but it wasn't long before Medeski ditched his unwieldy requirement for an upright piano (a classical music student from age 5, the young prodigy resisted classical training in favor of the more open-minded education that the New England Conservatory could provide). And so began MMW's much-documented history of



Chris Wood (left), John Medeski and Billy Martin

cross-country tours in Martin's van and later, in their RV. And the more they toured, the better their work became. What seemed to stick from their second album, *It's A Jungle In Here*, to their third, *Friday Afternoon In The Universe*, was in many ways what was working in live shows: original music, with plenty of nods to hip-shake-inducers from Duke Ellington to Sly Stone but moreover a serious knack for unique rhythmic patters and unorthodox melodies.

Having escaped the East Village to explore a wider variety of sounds developing across the country and around the world, Medeski Martin & Wood cemented their success by touring. But when that got them a record deal with Blue Note, it also meant a change in creating music the way that had worked for them for so long.

"The good thing [about having our own label] is that we own the music," Martin says. "All the music in the past, we don't own it, we can't use it in any other way or re-release it or license without asking someone, and just the ownership of the music is very empowering."

The shift also ushered a change in their writing, recording and touring process. A major label is unlikely to release three albums in one year—too costly, too risky, not enough opportunities for the cash to flow back. For three guys who consider one another family, putting the onus of creation on the gigs themselves freed them from what could otherwise be a long period of time in the studio, followed by a tour in support of that same material. When the focus falls on making the music work on a tight schedule, says Wood, you start to recognize the importance of every single gig. And that makes each show count even more.

"We didn't have a ton of time to get [the material] together, so we just had to go for it," he explains. "We've been working together for a long time, so there's kind of a natural editing process that happens that we don't even know about—that's just the way we work. We end up with a sound that's different but still us."

Their process inspires more than just the three of them, too.

When Mike Stern was working on material for his latest CD, *Big Neighborhood*, the guitarist invited the band to jump in on the track "Check One." Stern shared a friend and mentor in Bob Moses with the trio, and he says he'd always connected with their "soulful, quirky" vibe.

"I sent them some demos," says Stern. "And right away there was an instant groove. That doesn't always happen, even with great players. But John is very adventurous ... he's wacky in a cool way. Chris has a great feel and can nail something right away."

But it was Billy Martin who made Stern really think twice about the music. He felt like he'd screwed up the tune on the first take. "I told him not to play a certain part. I had an idea for a backbeat on the bridge and I wanted to do it over. I mean, man, I hate doing that. I like to

do everything live. It's gotta have that live edge. Still, I said, 'Billy, I'm so used to it this way. I want to do it over again.' And he said he was going to do it," Stern pauses to laugh. "Then he said, 'But I really hate to fucking do that.'"

"And the vibe they put on it was perfect, and more original than my first idea."

Recently, Medeski Martin & Wood have also extended their influence beyond the professional jazz world. Celebrating its second anniversary this year in New York's Catskill Mountains, Camp MMW offers music stu-

dents—and teachers or pro musicians—a chance to "look inside themselves and hear music a different way," as Medeski puts it.

"People have also been asking us for years, 'How did you create music like that?' he says. "We realized maybe there's something we could offer to people who are interested."

Martin, who takes the reins as group spokesperson as often as he takes the wheel, jumps in to clarify.

"The reason we wanted to get beyond all these basic music lessons is because the levels

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of ability for the students are so varied. We have people who don't know the first thing about theory or scales or anything, and then we have other people who are college music professors. We're trying to get beyond techniques of the stuff you learn in your average music camp and talk about other things. Like how you connect [to the] music so you can play in your own voice, and fuse to that what you know of technique and improvise."

Open to applicants age 16 and older, the week-long program offers master classes, workshops, discussions and films aimed to improve the creative composition and improvising skills of any musician accepted to the program.

"WE MAKE MUSIC THAT HAS A LOT OF ROOTS BUT IT'S NOT ROOTED IN ANY ONE PARTICULAR GENRE. JUST ... HOMELESS."

Even as MMW works to get back to their own creative roots, they open up their process to a new generation of musicians—as private music teachers, camp administrators and, more widely, as some of music's most influential artists.

During the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the trio took over a new venue in a public school auditorium in the Crescent City's 9th Ward, where blues-soaked bass lines fed acoustic jams that turned into

Wurlitzer solos as Logic added textures to a room awash in thick funk. It's one of many cities that has always embraced the band, owing in part to the homage they pay to the roots of New Orleans music. The Afro-Caribbean second line beats and ribbon of blues that runs through the local culture matches MMW's approach so perfectly that for many years, they've been a Jazz Fest hit.

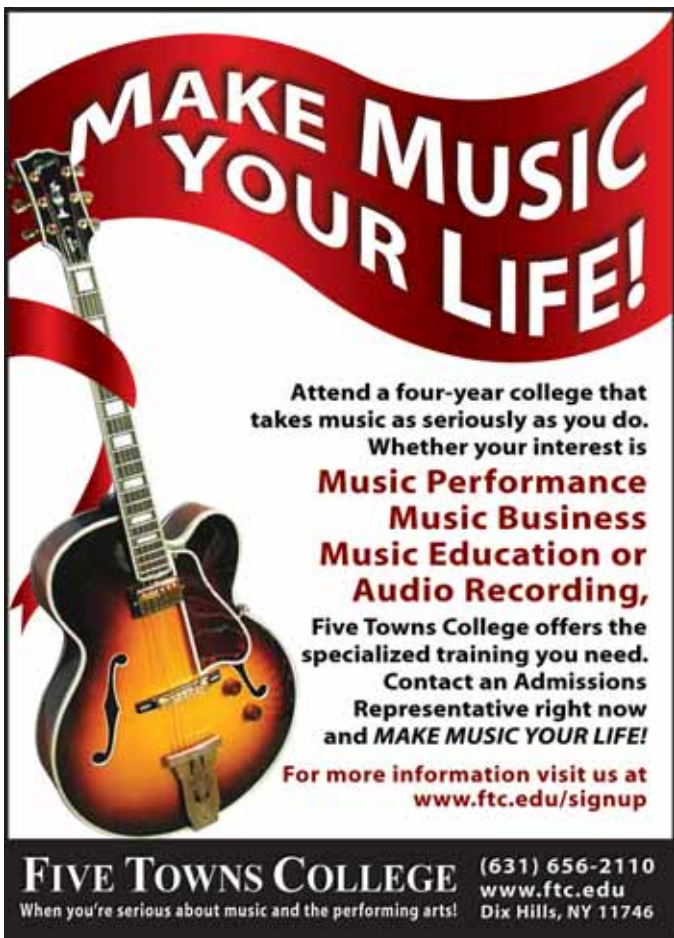
"I remember being amazed when we first played together at the Knit," Logic recalls. "They were laying down some hot music, but I couldn't believe when I saw the audience's reaction to it. I've always thought of audience reaction as their fourth member."

Whether they have a true fourth member or not is ultimately beside the point. Unlike their new material's unicellular namesake, MMW bases 99 percent of their success on their ability to function as a unit at a high level. Asked what inspires them about one another, quips like, "Hey, Billy, get your hand off my leg" and "I owe these guys a lot of money" get tossed around the van before the truth comes out. Medeski jokes that he'd "probably float off into space" without Wood's anchoring role, noting his bandmate's solid bass playing and ability to figure anything out.

"Billy is the heart of the independent spirit of this band," Wood says, adding that Martin's capacity for funkiness and perfect timing are "incredible." Martin, meanwhile, holds up the "awareness and sensitivity" that Medeski brings to the group as a key to the band's success.

"We are really like a family," Medeski says. "Our relationship is deep. We see many things together, personally and musically, and being on the road in such close quarters brings us closer. We love to hang out, eat, drink and be merry together before every show. We're living creatively. It's kind of a remarkable combination of things."

At a recent 10th anniversary party for Ropeadope Records, Medeski's keys and Martin's beats provided the house band's backbone.



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With Charlie Hunter on guitar, John Ellis on sax and New Orleans' brass-funk revivalist Big Sam Williams on trombone, the keyed-up, celebratory music showcased a side of this brand of improvised, rock-heavy groove that has developed its own category for critics. Although MMW's lasting presence and constant reinvention have finally started to loosen the binds of such categorization, these guys are willing to say the "j" word and tell you exactly what they think.

"We all feel it," Medeski says in response to a thinly veiled question about their reaction to the term "jamband." "[It's a] classic thing, people like to categorize things and there are people who call this jazz because they're coming from a rock background and anything instrumental is jazz to them. And there are people who say, 'Oh, they're not jazz.' It's perspective-oriented ... we've given up on these categories."

The industry—from magazines to festivals to record companies in need of easy marketing—is to blame for a dismissive habit of labeling music based in groove that embraces rock as openly as it does jazz. But a trio that lasts 18 years, survives a music business in crisis and three strong solo careers, and still finds inspiration in one another's ideas has the potential to shift and reinvent constantly, rendering such labels obsolete.


So how does MMW describe what they create?

"Homeless music," says Martin decisively, from his seat behind the wheel of the van. "We make music that has a lot of roots but it's not rooted in any one particular genre. Just ... homeless."

And so with a rekindled use of live shows as editing tools, a voracious appetite for new sounds and a teaching environment where voice and creative improvisation come first, Medeski, Martin and Wood's homeless music is getting back to its organic roots. **DB**

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Not Just For Jazz Lovers

By Ken Micallef

A few years ago, in conversation with a reporter from London's *The Sunday Times*, Lynne Arriale made the quietly provocative remark, "Jazz should not be only for jazz lovers."

The pianist's comment carries weight musically, politically and historically, not to mention its inherent marketing angle. While First Lady Michelle Obama hosts Wynton Marsalis and a troupe of talented jazz youngsters at the White House (see Page 13), questions as to how jazz can successfully market itself in broader terms remain a head-scratching concern. No ingénue to jazz, Arriale for 10 years led a successful trio (with bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Steve Davis) that released 11 albums to critical acclaim, including 2006's *Live* and 2004's *Come Together*. Praised for her compositions and soloing style, she has yet to crack the boys-club network of pianists who garner the bulk of press, concert draws and CD sales. So what exactly does Arriale's not-just-for-jazz-lovers comment mean?

"It's all about music, organized sound meant to reach people," Arriale explains. "It's thinking out of the box in that there should be no box, actually. It's about finding melodies that somehow resonate with listeners. Recently I've listened to a lot of pop and folk music, and what strikes me most about folk music is that without any harmony, the melodies have such integrity. I've started to think about what makes a great melody."

Engaging and elusive, Arriale puts the same intense level of precision-thinking into an interview as she does when composing and recording music. With her latest CD, *Nuance* (Motéma), Arriale raises her game from resourceful trio pianist to ingenious arranger, composer, soloist and performer. Joined by trumpeter/flugelhornist Randy Brecker, bassist George Mraz and drummer Anthony Pinciotti, Arriale has made one of the most original ensemble recordings of 2009. *Nuance* is an album of brilliant group interpretations, finely crafted original material, intricate arrangements and rapt solos.

"These were very personal arrangements Lynne created," Mraz says. "I never heard 'A Night In Tunisia' played in this way, and I've played it a million times. Lynne put a different twist to it that made it interesting, and it didn't sound overplayed like some standards are."

"Some leaders do multiple takes but without any reason why you should do them," observes Randy Brecker, speaking to Arriale's penchant for multiple takes (up to six per song). "She always had a reason, so each take was different and we couldn't fall back on trying to remember what we played on the previous take. Plus, we had to think in different directions because Lynne was specific as to what she wanted on each take. Just shifting the nuances of the tunes, maybe a different approach to a solo, more space, less notes. In the long run it made this a special project."

On *Nuance*, Arriale rethinks basic principles of jazz organization. Some may hear her elaborate reworkings of Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You," Sting's "Wrapped Around Your Finger" or Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night In Tunisia" as smartly conceived, pop-tinted renditions. Or her melodically charged solos as instances of premeditated note placement and planned phrasing. But there's no denying that the *Nuance* sessions presented veterans Brecker and Mraz with challenging material, resulting in some of the best solos of Brecker's career. Arriale's arrangements can be complex beasts.

"It wasn't typical," Mraz says. "Lynne has a very clear idea of what she wanted. It was very organized but also very loose—a good combination for jazz."

"Lynne has basically done her own thing her entire career," Pinciotti notes. "She had a vision for this record and it took a minute to fine-tune everyone; it wasn't a typical jazz date. Lynne was looking for each piece to have this specific feeling but also wanted our input. It was a balance between having our contributions with specific directions about phrasing and dynamics. It wasn't playing lead sheets."

Arriale's arrangement of "A Night In Tunisia" took about a year to complete. Not content to simply state the head and issue solos, she creates a knotty counterpoint rhythm, a ten-

sion-building line of unison accents that propels the soloists, and uses disorienting key centers that place the group in what she calls "no man's land."

"It's going through so many key centers that to end up on your feet in the right place is not easy," Arriale says. "I move the opening piano figure up a third, and that increases the adrenaline. I reharmonized it so I could play the melody differently. I also changed the [vamp] section, and put it in the end, so those in the know see that I didn't forget about it. The ending wasn't bombastic enough originally, so I rewrote it. And all this moving around of key centers creates a swirling feeling that you don't know where you are."

"The tune as we know it is harmonically simple and repetitive," she adds. "Harmonically I wanted to do more with it, and by putting different colors around it, it didn't seem ho-hum. And in our solos, we played outside the harmony so it wasn't strict. It lets you take flight."

Arriale takes a similar approach on "Wrapped Around Your Finger," dissecting and reassembling the melody, creating new ins and outs harmonically and rhythmically, fluttering under Brecker's solo as he soars from one height to the next.

"I told Randy, 'We're going to play the melody with this repeated, off-beat figure under you,'" she recalls. "I will take the first solo, then

I want you to come in at the top of my solo and take it up while I continue soloing.' I'm not doing a traditional comping role. I wanted that textural overlay, all that stuff going on underneath him, so he would start hitting notes and take it to mach 4 while I eventually recede. Within that you can hear me referring back to the melody, though harmonically it's totally different. There's no tonal center. I wanted that sense of ambiguity and intensity."

Arriale insists that her solos are drawn specifically from a song's melody and are not designed as jumping off points for simply blowing over changes. Her flowing, often dream-like cadences never follow expected paths.

"If you practice hard enough, you can take a harmonic progression and solo over it," says Arriale, an educator who works as Assistant Professor of Jazz Piano and Director of Small Ensembles at University of North Florida (unf.edu/coas/music/jazzstudies). "But it's jarring when we play the melody and all of a sudden it's just soloing. Playing a solo with parts of the melody is actually more challenging. Otherwise, it's a kind of plug-in jazz."

"The reality is the melody is not something to get out of the way in order to get to my solo," she asserts. "The melody is what creates a particular energy and a feeling in the listener, and it

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sets the tone. I want my solo to grow out of the melody. Part of that idea is influenced by my mentor, Richie Beirach. One of his many focuses has been to develop motives: take an idea, develop it, turn it inside out, come back to it at the end. That resonates with people. Ultimately people don't remember harmonic progressions. They remember melodies."

Arriale says she wants to sound like she's singing when playing the piano. She's even devised certain mind-over-matter exercises to free herself of constraints.

"Singing," she says, "connects us to our heart and our natural sense of phrasing as opposed to being left-brain oriented. There's a better chance of playing something that sounds natural if we are singing it. But it's easy to think you're playing and singing at the same time when you're really singing what your hands are playing. I correct that when I'm practicing by taking my hands off the piano and singing and intentionally trying to not see the piano in my mind.

"But the brain is seduced by sound," she adds. "As soon as we hear the sound of the instrument it takes us away from our inner sound. I avoid that by thinking, just forget the keyboard, just sing. I used to think that was easy, that if I would sing for 20 minutes and play, it would all connect. But as soon as we hear our instruments, it's like narcissism, our mind goes there. I want to turn the volume way up in my head and heart, so that I'm actually playing what I mean [to play]."

A recital DVD that accompanies *Nuance* shows the musicians stretching out in the intimate setting of Bennett Studios, unbounded by time constraints and inviting listeners even further into the creative process. Not only is the DVD an artistic delight, its inclusion was a shrewd business move decided on by Arriale's longtime producer and manager, Suzi Reynolds. Clips from the DVD can be viewed on Arriale's web site, Lynnearriale.com.

As far back as the early 1990s, when Arriale was attending the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, she realized her thought process was unconventional. She just didn't see things the way other students did, much less the instructors.

"I thought there must be something wrong with me," she recalls. "Students talked about chord substitutions based on theoretical concepts. If you pick a note, there are traditional progressions and substitutions that can go under it, but I think, what are all the colors that can go under a note that would make it work? Then you have a huge palette to work from. It can take me a long time to write an arrangement because I'm not thinking theoretically; I'm thinking, how does this sound? How does it feel when I listen to it?"

"At the end of the day it's about connecting with people and sharing, in an era when disconnection is quite common," she said. "Wouldn't it be nice if there was an oasis for a connection through music?"

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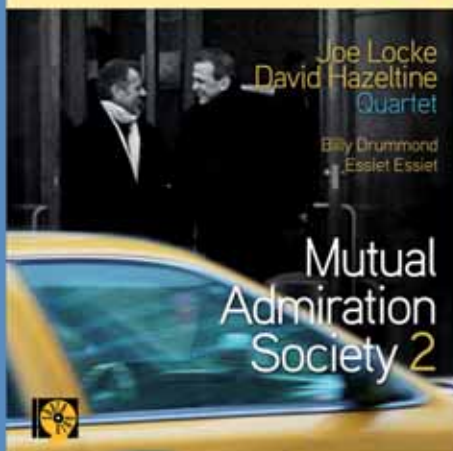


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THE IMPECCABLE MR. WILSON

By Tom Scanlan // January 22, 1959

Hundreds of pianists have tried to create something new and worthwhile in jazz piano improvisation, but only a handful have succeeded. One who has is Teddy Wilson.

Surely, if a responsible list of the half-dozen or so most creative and most influential pianists in jazz history were to be made, Wilson would be included. He is one of the giants of jazz piano; the number of pianists he has influenced, directly or indirectly, is beyond estimation.

It often has been said that Wilson's distinctive and highly original manner of playing was influenced primarily by Earl Hines, but Wilson himself will disagree. "Art Tatum," Teddy said.

In 1929, 17-year-old Teddy Wilson, son of James Wilson, head of the English department at Tuskegee Institute, left home to become a professional musician in Detroit. That year Teddy heard 19-year-old Art Tatum in a Detroit club, sitting in. From that time on, Tatum was *the* jazz pianist to Teddy Wilson.

"Yes, I liked Hines and Fats Waller," said Teddy. "But compared to Tatum, it seemed as though they were in a different field of activity."

Wilson, a soft-spoken and extremely articulate man, continued:

"Tatum was head and shoulders over all other jazz pianists and most classical pianists. He had the exceptional gift, the kind of ability that is very rare in people. He was almost like a man who could hit a home run every time at bat. He was a phenomenon. He brought an almost unbelievable degree of intense concentration to the piano and he had a keyboard command that I have heard with no other jazz pianist and with very few classical pianists—possibly Walter Gieseking—and it went much further than that, much further than being a great technician. Art was uncanny. He certainly impressed me more than any pianist I have ever heard."

What about James P. Johnson?

"I never heard James P. in his heyday," said Wilson, "and I'm sorry I didn't. When I heard him, he was rough. But while listening to John

Hammond's record collection one night, I heard some piano rolls James P. made in 1922, and they were amazing. Some of his ideas in 1922 would be appropriate with many of the present Basie orchestrations."

Speaking generally of the stride piano style, Wilson—who is not a stride pianist—said, "I don't think it should be lost. It is certainly valid. ... Fats perfected the stride style. He developed the fine points. He had more finesse than any stride piano player I ever heard."

Wilson began studying piano while in grade school. He switched to violin "in the sixth or seventh grade" and played violin through high school, where he also played oboe and E-flat clarinet in the school's military brass band.

During his last two years in high school, he took up piano again because the band needed a pianist. "I could read the bass clef, and they taught me to read stock orchestrations," Wilson explained.

While in high school, Teddy said he began to listen to jazz closely for the first time, adding, "My father liked vocal music: Caruso, John McCormack and also blues singers such as Bessie Smith, Mamie Smith and Trixie Smith. I often heard these records in the house, but I would never play my father's records voluntarily because my major interest was instrumental music.

"The first records of importance to me were "Singin' The Blues" by Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer and King Oliver's "Snag It" featuring the famous Oliver break. Later, with Tuskegee students, I heard "West End Blues" by the Armstrong Hot Five, with Earl Hines on piano, and Fats Waller's "Handful Of Keys."

"In 1928, during summer vacation, I went to Chicago and heard professional jazz in public for the first time: McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Fletcher Henderson and Horace Henderson. Benny Carter was with Horace when I first heard him. Also Rex Stewart. And Horace was

very good, too. Coleman Hawkins, Buster Bailey, Jimmy Harrison and Joe Smith were with Fletcher."

Harrison, who died in 1931, is one of the all-time greats of jazz so far as Wilson is concerned. "Jimmy had a real swinging style," Teddy said. "Now swing is not an objective word, but *my* conditioning of the swing feeling was the way Armstrong and Hines played on the Hot Five records—not the others, just Armstrong and Hines. And Harrison had my conception of swing. Another trombonist who has it is Jack Teagarden."

After hearing live "professional jazz" in Chicago, Teddy was determined to be a jazz musician, but his mother, Pearl, who like his father taught at Tuskegee, thought that Teddy should just give college a chance.

She suggested that he go to college for a year and then if he still wanted to be a musician, to go ahead "and be a good one." So Teddy went to Talladega college, 60 miles from Birmingham, Ala., for one year. "After that, I still wanted to be a musician so I quit college, according to our agreement, and went to Detroit to become a professional musician."

Teddy got his union card in Detroit, worked club dates off and on for a few months and eventually joined a road band working out of Peru, Ind., led by drummer Speed Webb. The band included Roy Eldridge, Vic Dickenson, Teddy's brother Augustus on trombone and all of the Bill Warfield band except for the pianist. They wanted Teddy.

"The Warfield group was very unusual," Wilson said. "These fellows, from memory, specialized in playing the Red Nichols repertoire. They could play the Nichols records all night from memory. Not just the ensemble but the solos, too." Trumpeter Reunald Jones, later with Ellington, was one of the Warfield band members.

Wilson worked with Webb from December 1929 until mid-1931. He left the band to join Milt Senior in Toledo, Ohio.

The pianist he replaced in the Senior band was Tatum. Tatum left to concentration upon solo work, primarily in radio. Wilson was with Senior, best known to jazz historians as the lead alto man with McKinney's Cotton Pickers, until the fall of 1931, when he went to work in the Gold Coast club in Chicago.

"This was quite a club," Teddy recalled. "A membership cost \$250, and each member got a solid gold card. ... Al Capone would come in regularly after hours and bring in a party of 10 or 20 people. He'd always have a wad of bills, and everyone who worked in the place got something. Every member of the band got \$20."

When the Gold Coast club closed because of a newspaper story concerning the gambling in the club, most of the band returned to Toledo, but Teddy remained in Chicago, jobbing around before joining Erskine Tate and later Francois' Louisianans. Then he went on the road for a few months with Louis Armstrong, with whom he made a dozen records.

"The main thing about the Armstrong band," according to Wilson, "was the way Louis could play so beautifully with such a bad band behind him. We had a few good musicians—Budd Johnson on tenor and his brother, Keg Johnson, on trombone—but it was not a good band."

Teddy paused to reflect for a moment and then chose his words with deliberation in summing up his feelings about Armstrong:

"I think Louis is the greatest jazz musician that's ever been. He had a combination of all the factors that make a good musician. He had balance ... this most of all. Tone. Harmonic sense. Excitement. Technical skill. Originality. Every musician, no matter how good, usually has something out of balance, be it tone, too much imitativeness, or whatever. But in Armstrong everything was in balance. He had no weak point. Of course, I am speaking in terms of the general idiom of his day. Trumpet playing is quite different today than it was then.

"I don't think there has been a musician since Armstrong who had had all the factors in balance, all the factors equally developed. Such a balance was the essential thing, about Beethoven, I think, and Armstrong, like Beethoven, had this high development of balance. Lyricism. Delicacy. Emotional outburst. Rhythm. Complete mastery of his horn."

After his tour with Armstrong, Wilson returned to Chicago and worked with Jimmy Noone and Eddie Mallory. "Noone had a beautiful low register and was very melodious," Teddy said. "His playing was characterized by smooth legato playing."

In 1933 Wilson went to New York to join Benny Carter after the latter had gone to Chicago to hear Teddy with Noone on the recommendation of John Hammond.

The Carter band broke up after playing two jobs—the Empire ballroom and the Harlem club—and Wilson joined Willie Bryant's new band. Bryant was not a musician, but a showman, and bookers had the idea that he could make it like Cab Calloway. It didn't quite work out that way, but Wilson was with Bryant until 1935. After that, Teddy had two jobs: backing the Charioteers quintet on radio and as intermission pianist at the Famous Door on 52nd Street.

In '35, Teddy also began making his famous series of records featuring singer Billie Holiday and many great jazz musicians.

These records date from '35 to '40, and any list of the most influential and most stimulating jazz records of all time would have to include some of these sides, as good today as they were then. How many musicians became jazz musicians because of Lester Young's solos or Roy Eldridge's solos or Wilson's solos on these records? No one can tell. But it probably is a long list containing some distinguished names.

Has Wilson read Miss Holiday's autobiography, *Lady Sings the Blues*?
He has. Quickly.

"And I don't think much of it," he said. "It's full of distorted emphasis and sheer fabrication. I don't see how anyone could write a book like that."

The pianist's evaluation of some of the musicians of that period, particularly those he played with on the memorable Holiday records, include the following regarding Young:

"I think Lester is one of the great landmarks in jazz. When Hawk was

the yardstick of tenor playing, Lester came along with something different and valuable based on great originality and skill."

Teddy said he considers Young as one of the three most influential musicians in jazz, the others being Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker.

"I certainly think Lester belongs in there somewhere," Wilson said. "But he has never seemed quite the same since the war. ... On the record I made with him in '56, I thought he had some of his prewar sparkle, but this was made when he had just been released from the hospital and had not been drinking."

Parenthetically, Wilson added, "Guys who think they play better when they are loaded are out of their minds. When you are drinking, the sparkle is gone. A musician who has been drinking might feel like he's playing better, but he's not. You'd think some musicians who drink would listen to the records they've made while they've been drinking and realize this, but they don't."

It was also in 1935 that Wilson jammed with Benny Goodman at a party given by singer Mildred Bailey. The results of this trio session (the drummer was "Mildred's cousin, a test pilot, an amateur drummer") helped to shape the course of jazz and bring Wilson international fame with Goodman.

Because of the exciting way Teddy and Benny improvised together, John Hammond wanted to record them, and he decided to use Gene Krupa on drums. At that time, Krupa was with Mal Hallett's band. Hammond arranged the record date with RCA Victor and the justly famous Goodman trio was born.

Wilson's first nonrecording job with Goodman was at the Congress Hotel in Chicago on Easter Sunday, 1936. Hammond drummed up the idea of Sunday afternoon jazz concerts at the hotel with outside musicians as guest stars, and Wilson was one of the first to be featured. He was such a hit that he was asked to join the band as a steady member.

As the first Negro featured with a nationally known white band, did Wilson have much trouble with racial prejudice while working with Goodman?

"Only in regards to hotels ... sleeping accommodations and hotel restaurants," Wilson remembered.

Only in the South?

"Oh, no, North and South. And there was another thing, too. The first movie we did—I think it was called *The Big Broadcast of 1937*, something like that—the movie people wanted me to play the soundtrack but wouldn't allow me to be photographed. I didn't agree to that, and I wasn't in the movie."

Speaking generally of the swing era, Wilson said, "It was a very exciting period. The Goodman band was the first jazz to become a nationally popular thing, and it took us all by surprise. No one expected it. And in those years, the audience would even applaud a good figuration. You never see that now!

"Of course, a big part of the audience was sensitive to showmanship—the drum solos, for example—but a good many people in the audience were obviously musically sensitive. In contrast, the audience today is so *jaded*. They have to be entertained. It's a problem that young musicians must face.

"Music is something like baseball, movies, or any other entertainment medium in that respect. It isn't easy, and it sometimes calls for values that are not musical. Today, music is not the thing, as it was then. I imagine it's discouraging for a good young musician today when he sees how successful a mediocre musician can be."

Teddy said he believes that a major reason why the Goodman band was able to become the first nationally popular jazz band is because Benny kept music at danceable tempos. He elaborated:

"Goodman would sometimes stand in front of the band, tapping his foot for as long as a minute, almost as if feeling the pulse of the dancers, to assure the proper time."

Wilson added that the band had "a good sound, one of the great clarinet players, good intonation in the reed section, first-rate trumpet work and other musical values, and it was playing within the dance tradition."

Wilson said jazz has lost the mass audience partly because it came to

ignore dancers. "And so rock 'n' roll, as bad as it is, is filing the vacuum.

"Ellington, of course, has always had high musical standards, as well as a good dance band, too. He's done an amazing job over the years to keep his band in touch with the public while doing other things in music, too."

Wilson left Goodman in 1939 to form his own big band. The band lasted about a year and was not a commercial success although it won high praise from musicians and critics. Of this band, Wilson said:

"The band simply didn't have much mass appeal. We didn't have enough show pieces. We played good dance music, but we needed 10 or 20 good *stomp* head arrangements to add the excitement that was missing. The mistake I made was in concentrating too much on written arrangements."

From 1940 to 1944, Wilson fronted an all-start sextet at the two Cafes Society, Uptown and Downtown, and in 1945 he rejoined Goodman, working with Red Norvo and Slam Steward in the Goodman sextet.

During the next decade, Teddy was in studio work most of the time, as a staff musician at New York's WNEW and later at CBS. He also taught annual summer classes on jazz piano improvisation at Juilliard. Since the 1956 Goodman movie, Teddy has made more club appearances, notably at the New York City Embers. Currently, he is using Bert Dahlander, the Swedish drummer, and bass man Arvell Shaw in his trio.

Although he has not taught for some time, Wilson remembers and is typically quick to praise his former students, particularly John Ferrincieli, who "played stride piano against a modern type of right hand," and William Nalle, now in studio work. "I had some other talented students, too, and I am talking about *real* piano players," he said.

As might be expected from a two-handed pianist who understands that a piano is not a drum, a pianist whose work has been distinguished by superb finger control, a keen sense of dynamics, master legato playing, originality, love of melody, a compelling and resilient beat and a complete absence of gimmicks, Wilson does not think much of most contemporary jazz pianists.

"With few exceptions, what they play is a caricature of the piano," Teddy said. "A caricature simply because of the way the piano is made. And pianists today all sound so much alike."

But Wilson, the schooled pianist, does not include Erroll Garner, who cannot read music, among the caricaturists. Teddy explained:

"Garner brought a great deal of originality to jazz piano, working with his time lag. His phrases come through with such conviction because they are his own. On the other hand, when you imitate another musician's way of playing and are too derivative, your phrases are not too clear, are just a shade vague, and they lack real conviction."

Wilson, also a critic of modern rhythm sections, said, "Drummers today play a continuous solo, from 9 till 4. And I always thought a saxophonist like Parker would sound much better with a conventional rhythm section than with a *hipster* rhythm section. To my mind, if the background gets too complex, it kills the solo. I guess Dizzy and others like that kind of drummer and that kind of rhythm section, but I don't. The Parker-like soloists would sound much better if they had simpler harmonic backgrounds; then their own harmonic thinking would come over far better."

Wilson also said he feels that the development of records, ironically, has helped what he terms the "conformity" in jazz today.

"When I came up, there was a good deal of local influence," he said. "We would travel 30 miles or so to hear another musician who had his own way of playing. Musicians developed different approaches to music in different cities. But today the same jazz records are available and popular all over. They influence young musicians in New York, Atlanta, Paris, or Tuskegee, at the same time. All this tends for conformity."

Perhaps Wilson's point of view concerning jazz today is best summed up with this offhand remark: "You have creative people and you have imitative people, and in a period of conformity, as today, there are more imitative people."

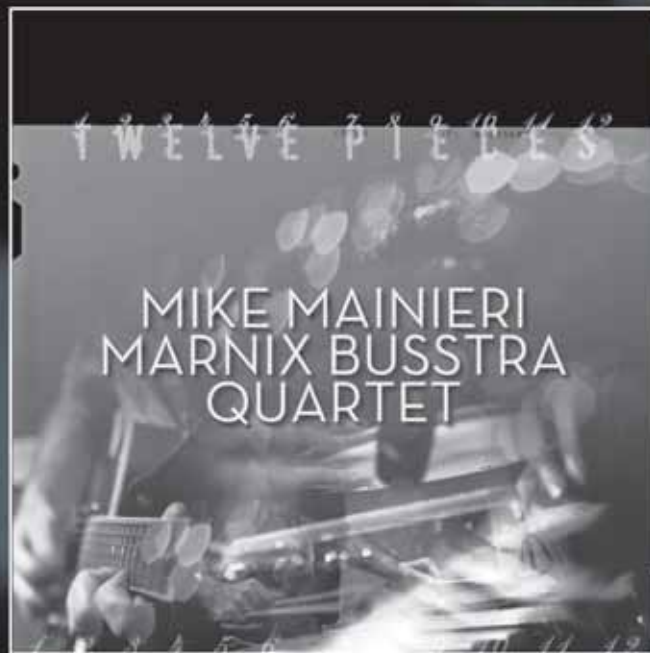
What does he think of the music business today?

"I do feel that music has *got* to come back," he said.

DB

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Hammond Organs Still Roaring at 75

Aside from the low whirl of a few spinning motors, slight sound of engineers testing circuits and light conversation from a few staffers, Hammond Suzuki's combined office/factory is remarkably quiet on a mid-week summer afternoon. Company senior vice president Dennis Capiga remarks that such an atmosphere is unusual—he notes that this plant in Addison, Ill., can build around 15 to 20 of its famous organs a week, and can ship 54 Leslie speakers. Still, the serenity does make sense, as substantial silent concentration must go into crafting an instrument that can launch jet-engine-like roars. While grooving.

That instrument, the Hammond organ, is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. Jazz musicians and audiences have been drawn towards the B-3 model in particular for decades—from the earthy funk of Jimmy Smith to today's Medeski Martin & Wood (Page 26). And several of jazz's long-time top organists have always been Hammond loyalists.

"I've played other organs in the early years and it just didn't express what I felt," said organist Dr. Lonnie Smith. "The Hammond is an orchestra by itself. You have everything that you need right there. It has the elements of thunder, sunshine, rain, everything there for you."

All of this stems back to electronics inventor Laurens Hammond, who developed the Hammond tonewheel in 1934. According to Mark Vail's 1997 book, *The Hammond Organ*, he had a string of unorthodox ideas in the early '30s, including an auto-shuffling bridge table and synchronous clock. But when the Depression hit, he used his tonewheel motor to devise a new kind of electronic flute, and that led to bundling these together for an inexpensive pipe organ. A set of harmonic drawbars also gave the Hammond organ an array of tonal combinations.

"George Gershwin bought one of the first ones," said Hammond project manager Scott May. "It took off immediately and a lot of those organs, the Model A's, are still around. They were made so well, we got the old-timers coming in to visit us."

Hammond's organ took off especially in homes and churches, but it made inroads into jazz, especially with Fats Waller, Milt Buckner and Count Basie at the keys. Still, it was records like *The Incredible Jimmy Smith* in 1956, as well as players like Jimmy McGriff, Big John Patton and Shirley Scott who got the B-3 craze burning throughout the '50s and '60s (though Lonnie Smith remembers that it



Dr. Lonnie Smith

JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROW PHOTOS



Tony Monaco

STEVE KYBER

was Hammond's similar C-3 model that was used at Rudy Van Gelder's studio for those famous Blue Note recordings). Organist Tony Monaco said, "Jimmy Smith took the drawbar settings and turned it into the ultimate bass machine."

"The difference between a B-3 and the others is the percussion," May added. "That and the six-position knob, which gave it that control."

Alongside the Hammond organ's development, Don Leslie, a fan of the instrument, designed and sold its ideal speaker—one that could accentuate the Hammond's arrest-

ing dynamics and match its burdensome weight. Problem was, since Laurens Hammond wanted to keep everything in house, he saw Leslie as an interloper.

"When Leslie invented the speaker, the sound was bouncing, coming from different areas, throwing treble and bass 360 degrees," Monaco said. "Hammond had scouts checking Don Leslie's invention to tell him it was no good."

"Mr. Hammond forbade Hammond dealers from selling Leslie speakers," May added. "You had to walk down the street to buy a Leslie speaker. When [Laurens]

Hammond died [in 1973], Hammond bought the [Leslie] company."

By the early '70s, a decline in home music making hit many traditional instrument manufacturers, Hammond included. "It seemed like young people found a different avenue for their time," Capiga said. "In my time, we enjoyed making music. It wasn't a quick decline, it was over a 10-year period." But the Hammond organ also became the victim of a kind of guilt-by-association in terms of image.

"It was the creation of the mall, and there were all these other companies that made organs that sounded nothing at all like the Hammond." May said. "They put a guy in a bad suit in a mall, playing terribly square music. And in the '70s, this guy in a bad leisure suit might appeal to grandma and grandpa but is the complete antithesis of being cool."

In 1974, Hammond stopped manufacturing the B-3 and the company went through a process of trying to reinvent itself. But in 1989, Suzuki purchased Hammond and with its president, Manji Suzuki, a fan of the vintage sound, the company turned back towards what it had done best. Fortuitously, this coincided with a renewed interest in organ-based jazz grooves that has been growing since the '90s—just listen to any number of hip-hop records that use classic recordings as samples.

Hammond itself went digital in 1972 and it used the technology for the XB-3 in the mid '90s. More recently, the company has reintroduced its B-3. Called the B-3 mk2, it sounds remarkably similar to the vintage model. Key differences are that the new model has MIDI pedals and an information center to store presets, and its generator has 96 digital tone wheels (the original has 91 analog ones). Another big difference is sheer heft—the new B-3 weighs 293 pounds, whereas the vintage model hit the scales at 419 pounds.

"Our files were invaluable," Capiga said about designing the newer model. "We had to go back and find the original drawings. This has the exact cabinet of the old B-3—the only thing you don't get is the smell of the oil."

"You cannot beat the dedication they have put in this organ," Lonnie Smith said. "They've been dedicated to making and keeping the B-3 sound. You can sit right next to me when I play one of those and you wouldn't know the difference. It's amazing. To get that sound, they have done their homework. When you touch a note and the expression that you get from it, it's unbelievable. It is the best, and will always be the best." —Aaron Cohen

» Ordering info: hammondorganco.com

Zoom H4n: Pocket-Sized Digital Studio

The new Zoom H4n Handy Recorder is the latest addition to the company's portable digital recorder line. Following the H2 and H4 models (released in 2007), the H4n is a serious upgrade in both construction quality and capabilities.

Zoom's H2 and H4 models offered great features at affordable prices, but received criticism for their somewhat flimsy plastic construction. The new H4n is built solid as a tank and has a generous array of features that that would be impressive at twice the price. At a retail price of around \$350, this machine is a serious competitor in the market.

The H4n is housed in a durable rubberized plastic casing with a nice backlit display screen and easy-to-use navigation and transport buttons. The recorder runs on two AA batteries or with the included power adapter, and Zoom claims 6 hours use. A pair of miniature stereo condenser mics is solidly mounted into an aluminum cradle atop the unit. The mics are posed in an X/Y pattern that can be adjusted with a quick twist for either 90- or 120-degree directivity. An external stereo microphone can also be connected. To



top things off, two combo (1/4-inch/XLR) jacks with selectable phantom power are available for connecting external microphones or line level devices such as instruments, and a built-in speaker provides playback.

The unit uses standard SD memory cards and is capable of recording to a variety of digital formats including mp3 and high-quality uncompressed .WAV up to 24 bit at 96kHz. Navigating the intuitive menus, you can begin to unlock the awesome potential of this little powerhouse. The H4n records in three basic

modes: stereo, 4-channel and MTR (multi-track recording). Couple this with its multiple connectivity options plus built-in digital effects, onboard tuner, metronome and variable speed playback, and you have a complete pocket-sized studio. It can even function as a USB audio interface to your computer for hard-disk recording with the bundled Cubase LE software.

—Keith Baumann

» Ordering info: samsontech.com



Pearl Maesta 9701 Flute: Incredibly Dynamic

The new Maesta 9701 flute is the most affordable model of Pearl's top-of-the-line Maesta Series. The handmade, open-hole professional instrument is made of .970 "Pristine" silver; the model I tested also features a low B foot and offset G key.

On first playing, the Maesta 9701 was so free-blowing that I tended to overplay it a lot. I'm a saxophonist who plays a ton of flute in many different styles, and I'm used to older Hanes flutes, which are more resistant. However, after a couple of days of simple warmups, I relaxed enough and found a comfort zone where I was in tune with the instrument, and quite an instrument it is.

Over the course of three weeks I used the Maesta 9701 on numerous Latin jazz gigs, a charanga-style job, a couple of light pseudo-classical jobs, a record date and a Jethro Tull tribute performance. The instrument performed beautifully in each situation. What impressed me most was its incredible dynam-

ic range whether playing with a straight tone or getting "rowdy" with it—I employed many tonguing, vocal and vibrato effects, depending on the jobs. The response at whisper level was far superior to my flutes, and when desired, the power and volume on the high end required much less effort than what I am accustomed to. The dynamic range between the two extremes was seamless.

I can't think of anything I didn't love about this flute. The response and tone were magnificent. But an instrument of this quality does not come cheap. If you're an active freelancer and have to own, maintain and insure a large arsenal of axes, the Maesta 9701's \$8,000 suggested retail price may make it cost-prohibitive. However, if flute is your main axe, or if you're a doubler who likes to cover a lot of styles and can afford the investment, I highly recommend giving it a try. —Steve Eisen

» Ordering info: pearlflute.com

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1 Piano Jazz

Berklee Press has published *Berklee Jazz Piano*, by educator Ray Santisi, mentor to Keith Jarrett, Diana Krall and Joe Zawinul. The all-encompassing book and accompanying practice CD blend theory and application to give a deep, practical understanding of how to play jazz the Berklee way. Students will learn jazz chords and their characteristic tension substitutions, modes and scales, approaches to comping/walking/harmonizing/improvising, practice techniques and such advanced concepts as rhythmic displacement, approach-chord harmonization and jazz counterpoint.

More info: halleonard.com



1

2 POD Launch

Line 6 has introduced the POD Studio KB37, a USB audio interface that combines a 37-key MIDI controller and multiple inputs and outputs with a complete collection of pro audio software, including POD Farm. With a retail price of \$419.99, the KB37 offers 24-bit/96-kHz recording, velocity-sensitive keys and software-assignable MIDI controls.

More info: line6.com



2

3 Keyed In

Korg has added a 73-key unit to its M50 workstation line. The M50's Extended Definition Synthesis sound engine delivers high-quality sounds and effects. Also new are a number of vintage keyboards, including the classic Korg SG-1 sampling grand and authentic electric pianos and clavs, along with 1960s-era tape playback strings and flute sounds. The M50's streamlined, modern design includes an angled control panel and Korg's full-size Touch View interface. MSRP: \$1,899.

More info: korg.com



5

GEAR BOX

4 Session Control

M-Audio's new Axiom Pro 49 and Pro 61 provide a responsive playing experience with deep tactile control that imitates the feel of a real piano. The 49- and 61-key Axiom Pro models integrate easily with DAWs, including Pro Tools, Cubase, Logic and Reason software. They let users control entire sessions directly from their keyboards.

More info: maudio.com



4

5 Hip Voicings

Roland's new VP-770 vocal and ensemble keyboard features vocal effects, ensemble sounds, an enhanced user interface and on-board sounds to fit any music genre. The VP-770 is also equipped with high-resolution vocoder modeling, which can generate vocal effects without using a separate processor.

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More info: rolandus.com



3



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Thinking Like A Drummer At The Keyboard

The unique rhythmic context in which we place our improvised melodies and harmonies most clearly defines the jazz genre. While dozens of excellent books and countless articles have been written about improvisation, chord voicings, patterns, scales and theory, it seems that considerably less attention has been given to the topic of rhythm, as it applies to non-drummers.

And, naturally, nobody in a jazz group understands rhythm better than the drummers—it's 99 percent of their focus. Drums were my first instrument. I played drum set as a teenager and gradually migrated to the piano, mostly for practical reasons. Though I did the customary jazz piano homework, studying linear development and harmonic structures, I never lost interest in trying to create compelling rhythmic devices in my playing. In this Master Class, I'd like to share with you some ideas that, if applied and expanded upon, will enhance your rhythmic experience and give you some fun new tricks to try out.

An easy way to get a grip on drum concepts, and hence improve your rhythmic vocabulary, is to pick up a book like the snare drum manual *Stick Control* by George Lawrence Stone. Other recommended drum "bibles" are *4-Way Coordination* by Marvin Dahlgren and *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer* by Jim Chapin. The idea isn't, of course, to become the next Buddy Rich or learn to play piano with your feet, but rather to find creative ways to adapt these concepts to melodic improvisation. Take, for example, one of the basic snare drum rudiments, the paradiddle (see Example 1).

Just as a drummer can spread this pattern around different drums while keeping the sticking intact (RLRR LRL), you can assign them to different notes on the piano (Example 2).

Practice these rudiments (along with your own creative variations) on your instrument, assigning different notes and fingers of each

Example 1

Example 2

Example 3

(double paradiddle)

Example 4

Example 5



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 - Philip Booth, *Downbeat*, February 2009.



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 - Howard Reich, *Chicago Tribune*, March 2009.



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 - Matt Marshall, *Jazz Improv NY*, June 2009.



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 - Matthew Warnock, *All About Jazz*, June 2009.

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hand to each R and L, with the goal of getting them very fast and clean. Use a metronome. At quicker tempos, these rudiment ideas can sound really cool and leave your audience wondering how the heck you're doing it. Here are some examples using a double paradiddle (RLRLRR LRLRLL). Use any notes (or groups of notes) you desire, just keep the "sticking" pattern consistent. The chord (C7sus4) is there merely to add harmonic context—don't get caught up in the harmony/voicings aspect right now (Example 3).

The following transcription from my recording of "Stompin' At The Savoy" on my *Wildcrafted* (Maxjazz) CD occurs at 1:20 in the track. Using 16th notes, I played four groups of threes (RLL RLL RLL RLL) followed by an RLRL (3+3+3+3+4), repeated the entire pattern for another bar, then played two groups of six (RRLRLL) followed by RRL (6+6+4). While these stickings don't correspond exactly to any rudiments I know, they are definitely influenced by them. (If you want to earn extra credit, you could say the group of six is three-quarters of a paradiddle, minus the first two strokes!) Try tapping these rhythms out slowly with your hands on a table. Next, with your hands on the piano keyboard, imagine you're sitting at a drum set: your right hand is on the ride cymbal and your left is on the snare drum (or any other combination of drums you can conjure up). You're basically playing drums on the piano and adding harmony to it (Example 4).

Triplets are another device I like, but placing the accents in such a way that they're grouped into sets of fours or fives. I sometimes practice scales this way to challenge myself and keep my brain awake—it takes some serious multitasking. The next example is taken from the song "Leucadia" on my CD *Aurea* (ArtistShare), at 0:12. The basic groove is an Afro-Peruvian *festejo*, a 12/8 rhythm that emphasizes the fifth and eighth beat of each bar (I've notated it as triplets in 4/4 so it's easier to see where the pulse is). With this groove in mind, I improvised this section in the moment while trying to keep the unusual clave intact (Example 5).

If you're going to attempt these quasi-acrobatic feats on the piano, make sure you're still keeping time and locking in with the drums. Without a relationship to what the drummer is doing, this stuff can turn into a horrible mess

very quickly. And if you're playing in a group without drums, then it is even more crucial that your time be impeccable. Besides practicing with a metronome, how else can we develop our sense of groove? Go to the source: spend six months listening to nothing but the Count Basie

band, and another six months listening to James Brown. **DB**

Pianist Geoffrey Keezer has taught workshops all around the globe for the past 20 years. His new CD, *Aurea*, can be found at geoffreykeezer.com.

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Mike Nock's 'In Out And Around' Piano Solo Based on Clear Melodic Development

Mike Nock's 1978 recording *In Out And Around* (Timeless) features a variety of music and showcases Nock's ability as a composer and versatility as a pianist. Accompanied by Michael Brecker on tenor saxophone and a rhythm section of bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster, Nock closes the album with the title track, an up-tempo swing tune. It's a 32-measure AABA form; the A sections are basically B \flat 7, while the complex bridge is a minefield of polychords.

Playing on a tune like this was meat and potatoes for both Nock and Brecker, although the bridge posed its own set of problems. Nock recalled: "That chromatic section was really hard to play over, but Mike just played anything he wanted to, which is what you do. Some people might try to nail everything, but he didn't even try, and it's great."

One of the most striking things about Nock's piano solo is its clear melodic development. This is apparent from the outset, where Nock troubles a three-note cell for the first eight mea-

asures (measures 1–8 shown here). That kind of melodic development reappears with the ascending (and later descending) four-note phrases that occur between measures 11–25. This melodically oriented approach continues from measure 26, where a long phrase is more or less repeated, with a new concluding phrase. It's an approach that is evident in the second chorus, where a two-note motif is given a lengthy workout (measures 32–43).

A second feature of this solo is the way Nock's lines go "in" and "out" as he negotiates his way around the changes. The clearest example of this is from measures 59–66, where Nock plays first in D \flat pentatonic and then in A major against Mraz's B \flat 7 accompaniment. These "out" lines return to the home tonality of B \flat mixolydian squarely at the start of the third chorus, where Nock emphatically lands on the tonic.

Reviewers of the album (which earned four stars in DownBeat) commented on Nock's ability to draw the best out of his sidemen, but he's



DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

not found wanting when the spotlight is turned onto his own playing. This solo contains evidence of the fire and the thoughtfulness that have always characterized his music. Perhaps not as well known in the States now as he was in the 1970s, the New Zealand-born pianist's music is well worth investigating, and this solo is a fine testimony to his jazz credentials. **DB**

Norman Meehan is a jazz pianist in Wellington, New Zealand. His day job is Associate Director of the New Zealand School of Music.

GRETCHEN PARLATO IN A DREAM

In A Dream finds Downbeat Rising Star vocalist **Gretchen Parlato** embarking on a beguiling journey deep into the heart of both her own compositions and classic material by the likes of Stevie Wonder, Duke Ellington, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, and others - all of which she instantly makes her own. Parlato's sense of rhythm and dynamics are enhanced by an intuitive quartet of rising stars **Lionel Loueke** (Blue Note), **Aaron Parks** (Blue Note), **Derrick Hodge** and **Kendrick Scott**.

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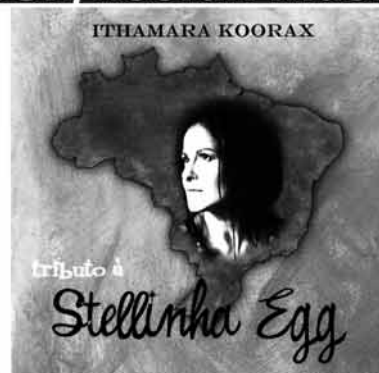
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Sheet music for the song "Tribute to Stellinha Egg" by Ithamara Koorax. The music is written in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of 77 measures across 11 staves. The first staff has a measure number '1' in a box. The second staff has a measure number '2' in a box. The third staff has a measure number '3' in a box. The fourth staff has a measure number '4' in a box. The fifth staff has a measure number '5' in a box. The sixth staff has a measure number '6' in a box. The seventh staff has a measure number '7' in a box. The eighth staff has a measure number '8' in a box. The ninth staff has a measure number '9' in a box. The tenth staff has a measure number '10' in a box. The eleventh staff has a measure number '11' in a box. The music includes various chords such as E/F#, E'/B, D/E, D'/E', B7sus, B7, Q1/R, F/D, and E'/B. There are also dynamic markings like 'STRAIGHT' and 'SILVA CONTINUES'.

INSPIRATIONAL MOTIVATION

By Michael Jackson

Free-form saxophonist and barnacle-fast Chicago club owner Fred Anderson—“the lone prophet of the prairie,” as AACM past president Douglas Ewart dubbed him—entered his eighth decade last March.

A host of local notables and out-of-towners descended on his seat of operations, the Velvet Lounge, to pay tribute to the man who has provided shelter and showcase to so many creative musicians since he opened his first club in 1978. The week-long celebration embraced such Anderson cohorts as bassists Henry Grimes, Harrison Bankhead, Richard Davis and Tatsu Aoki; drummers Avreeayl Ra, Chad Taylor, Ernie Adams, Kahil El’Zabar and Isaiah Spencer; and fellow reedists Edward “Kidd” Jordan, Hamiet Bluiett, Ed Wilkerson, Mwata Bowden, Ken Vandermark and Jimmy Ellis, to name a few.

Among the impromptu aggregations, saxophonist Ernest Dawkins presented the first annual Chicago Excellence in Creative Music Awards, which included performances from three established local groups: his own New Horizons Ensemble, singer Dee Alexander’s group plus guest flutist Nicole Mitchell and saxophonist Ari Brown’s Quartet.

Memorable scenes from the celebration included a dogwhistle-high altissimo rendition of “Happy Birthday” from Jordan; the presentation of a “Fred Anderson Day” citation from Chicago Mayor Richard Daley; a taping for an upcoming Delmark CD/DVD release; and heartfelt poetic recitations to “Baba” Fred from Alexander, Douglas Ewart and pianist Soji Adebayo, not to discount a tearful tribute from Anderson’s son Eugene, a drummer, reunited for the first onstage jam with his father in 30 years.

Like his “elder brother” on the Chicago scene, Von Freeman, Anderson has been a self-motivator from the get-go. “Fred’s my partner out here, and he’s always stuck right with it,” said Freeman, “He’s strictly got his own thing going and he’s great at it. You gotta believe in yourself down here, then whatever else you do will work out. Fred always dreamed of being a success in this business and his dream has come true.”

Success, of course, is measured on a sliding scale. But when Anderson talks about his current creative activities, at an age when most folks are preoccupied with the rearview mirror, it is nothing short of inspirational. Aside from the live birthday gig on Delmark, Fred has several new releases on a plethora of labels slated in upcoming months and is constantly collaborating in new situations. Case in point was a match-up last June with the Amsterdam-based trio of pianist Michiel Braam, bassist Wilbert De Joode and drummer Michael Vatcher. The tenorist’s second set with the trio witnessed strong, practically non-stop blowing for a solid hour. De Joode was particularly impressed, talking of the “fantastic connection” and his enthusiasm to record in a duo with Anderson. Braam commented succinctly that he “heard a language” in the saxophonist’s playing, which echoed a comment from bassist William Parker, with whom Anderson had performed at New York’s Vision Festival the week before.

“Fred follows the tradition of Coleman Hawkins, Don Byas and Sonny Rollins and all the great tenors who had voices,” said Parker over the phone. “Before melody, rhythm is his signature. He has his own intervallic path, phrasing and timing. The old, the now and the future are present in Fred Anderson’s playing;

you hear blues, deep soul, gospel all the tradition. In one low B-flat you can hear that.”

Another (unrelated) Parker, guitarist Jeff, has recorded with Anderson for the Delmark, Thrill Jockey and Asian Improv labels. He recalls a night at the Velvet Lounge when the bass player didn’t show. “(Drummer) Chad Taylor and I decided to play as a duo,” Parker said. “We were getting pretty deep into the Charlie Parker composition ‘Relaxin’ At Camarillo,’ then I saw this shadowy figure from the corner of my eye and there was Fred. He came from behind the bar with his tenor strapped on and joined us for the rest of the set.”

Parker toured with Anderson and drummer Hamid Drake and observed the Chicagoan’s daily regimen. “He always makes time for practice,” he said. “Before it is time to hit he steps into the persona of taking care of business on the horn, everything rises up way above the occasion. He doesn’t try to play the music; he becomes the music.”

Parker points out Anderson’s adoration of Charlie Parker, and his espousal of Bird’s creative spirit, as a prototype. When DownBeat met with Anderson at the Velvet Lounge—the clean storefront space with brightly colored walls that he opened in 2006 at 67 E.Cermak, just around the corner from its former site—the room resounded to Charlie Parker from the sound system. “It’s a new boxed set I ordered online from ESP,” Anderson enthused. “It’s called *Bird In Time*, with interviews and rare recordings.”

In May 2008 Anderson performed for the first time in Charlie Parker’s hometown, Kansas City, with a trio of bassist Josh Abrams and drummer Isaiah Spencer. “It was at the Blueroom,” said Anderson, “where they have



the alto that Buster Smith used to play on the wall. It was in Bird's possession when he died." Though he visited Parker's grave on his visit, Fred insisted that on the gig, "We didn't play any Parker tunes, we just played Fred Anderson."

Jeff Parker and Anderson discussed recording a set of Charlie Parker tunes and even had a couple of rehearsals, but it never happened. "I guess he decided to focus on his own music," acknowledges Parker, adding that it was Anderson's counsel to "trust his instincts" that made a big impression on him at a crucial time in his development. "It was very important advice for a young musician," insists Parker. "It basically meant, 'Be true to yourself.'"

Lauren Deutsch, director of the Jazz Institute of Chicago, has had a peculiarly intimate relationship with Anderson for 20 years—from behind a lens. Deutsch photographed Anderson for the cover of the Nessa album *The Missing Link* in 1979 and has subsequently been involved with numerous promotional and fine art projects with Anderson as the subject, including two recent releases from Asian Improv, a particularly forceful Anderson outing from a birthday concert in 2000 and a taping at the club from 2008. Not perhaps the most glamorous of subjects, with his TV-framed spectacles and habit of playing archbacked with face pointing floorward, Deutsch was impressed by the soft-

spoken way he always stood his ground.

Drawn to the creative proving ground that the original Velvet Lounge became as well as the characters who patronized the place, Deutsch would get there early to find a good vantage point for photography.

"Fred's a seeker," Deutsch observed. "When I arrived before a concert once, he was alone there. He was listening to a recording of himself, Hamid Drake and bassist Harrison Bankhead, from the Vision Festival." Fred wanted to hear whether what he had played really came across the way he thought it had. "I marveled that even a master is not sure. Fred said cats who think they are 'there' end right there. They never continue to grow." Nevertheless for Deutsch, Anderson's courage in his convictions helped her develop a voice in a new digital photographic medium. "This is how Fred has mentored us non-musicians," claims Deutsch. "He is a firm believer in everything he stands for: the freedom and desire to create absolutely original music, the importance of cultivating new players and new sounds, and the role of mentorship in the jazz community."

Drake, an early devotee of Anderson's, has gone on to record more than a dozen albums with the saxophonist. "The first time we recorded together was in May of 1978 on a date called *Another Place*," Drake recalled. "It was a live performance at the Moers Festival in Germany,

with Billy Brimfield on trumpet and George Lewis on trombone. It was my very first time in Europe and one of the most thrilling experiences of my life."

Anderson himself made his own first trip to Europe sometime later than his radical associates in Chicago's Association For The Advancement of Creative Musicians, an organization for which he is acknowledged as a lifelong "field representative" through the auspices of his Velvet Lounge finishing school. Pianist Dieter Glawischmig had convinced Anderson to meet him in Graz, Austria, to join the group The Neighbours. "I was there for a couple of months and they wanted me to stay," said Anderson, "but I had a house and family in Chicago and had to return."

After eventual divorce, in his mid-40s Anderson realized his dream of running a jazz club, calling his first place the Birdhouse in honor of a defunct club in the city he used to frequent. Inspired by his friends in Graz, he decided to locate in a German neighborhood at 4512 N. Lincoln on Chicago's northwest side. However, he was not welcome in the area and the authorities seemed so bemused by this space that didn't serve booze but provided refuge for a raft of oddball musicians, that they made it impossible for him to continue there.

After the untimely demise of the Birdhouse, Anderson shifted his base to the South Side, where he was helping a family friend, Tip Manyweathers, run a working man's bar (Anderson's BMI publishing trademark is listed as Many Weathers music). Fairly slowly, Anderson built up the reputation for live music at the Velvet Lounge, boosted by storied sessions held after the annual Chicago Jazz Festival when he would invite kindred spirit saxophonist Kidd Jordan up from New Orleans.

Jordan was tipped to Anderson by Chicago saxist Eddie Harris, who described him as "this guy who has been playing the 'out' style since right after the Second World War." In commemoration, at Anderson's 80th celebration, he and Jordan donned T-shirts adorned with Harris' image.

Anderson invited Jordan to join him at a concert for the 25th anniversary of the AACM at the University of Chicago in 1990, and Jordan has reciprocated with invitations to perform in New Orleans. One memorable concert at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in 1999 featured Anderson and Jordan with AACM godfather Muhal Richard Abrams, bassist Malachi Favors, George Lewis and Butch Morris, among others. "With Fred and I, every now and then we cross paths tonally when we play together, but we don't get in each other's way," comments Jordan, adding unequivocally, "Fred has one of the most original styles of anybody I heard on saxophone."

Another disciple of Anderson's from a different generation, reedist Ken Vandermark, has

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been proactive in promulgating Anderson's music. Vandermark introduced Anderson to Bruno Johnson, an apologetic rock bassist and vocalist who had started a label focusing on the alternative punk/rock scene. Bruno asked Anderson if he had any recordings he was interested in putting out. "The following morning, early, Fred called and told me about these tapes he had of a duo with drummer Steve McCall from 1980," Johnson said.

What resulted, *Vintage Duets*, was the first release on Johnson's Okkadisk label, founded in essence with Anderson in mind. Subsequent Okkadisk releases with Anderson include a 1997 collaboration with the DKV Trio (Hamid Drake, bassist Kent Kessler and Vandermark) and an intriguing summit from Chicago's Millennium Park in 2006 with Vandermark's Territory Band that features Anderson backed by Lasse Marhaug's electronics. "Fred Anderson represents the best aspects of what it means to be an independent artist in a commercial world—at 80 years of age he continues to develop his playing and ideas with no sign of slowing down or any interest in artistic compromise," Vandermark said. "He is a living example of what is possible when an artist remains committed to their personal vision and he shares that creativity with the rest of us every time he picks up his horn. Fred is an incredible inspiration for me."

Another musician who took inspiration from Anderson is saxophonist Dave Rempis, who has run a weekly improv series in Chicago for several years. "When the old Velvet was set for demolition," remarks Rempis, "it would have been very easy for Fred to have a nice party, celebrate the many years of great music and move on. Instead he made the unbelievable decision to open a new space at the age of 77. Every time I get frustrated by the difficulty involved in getting audiences out, keeping the venue open and trying to pay musicians, I think of Fred today, still, closing up the bar each night, taking out the trash, turning off the lights, and my inspiration to keep working at it comes right back."

Nicole Mitchell, current president of the AACM, has risen through the ranks of that institution, and her flowering as an artist was fostered by having a forum to foment her creative propositions, namely the Velvet. "Fred's words are quiet, but his actions are huge," Mitchell said. "By running the Lounge for over 20 years and welcoming experimentation and new ideas, he has been key to the development of so many young artists. Personally, I owe a lot to Baba Fred, as my group, Black Earth Ensemble, had its start at the Velvet 10 years ago and it is still our home base, as it is for the AACM's Great Black Music Ensemble."

For a snapshot of Anderson in formative days, check the photograph in George Lewis' indispensable narrative of the AACM, *A Power Stronger Than Itself* (University of Chicago Press). There he stands, broad shouldered, in one of his trademark kufi hats leading a septet including Lewis, Drake and Douglas Ewart.

Lewis is especially articulate in his assessment of the saxophonist. "Fred Anderson's long and fruitful career both exemplifies and challenges the standard American experimental tradition-narrative of the rugged individual," he said. "A product of that 20th Century African American assertion of mobility and agency now known as the Great Migration. Fred once described himself to me as 'a quiet guy, like an introvert, but I do a lot of thinking about what I want to do, and about being my own person.' There are undoubtedly others who see Fred as a man of few words, but from my personal experience,

I can attest that he had plenty to say, both sonically and verbally."

Lewis summarizes Anderson's lifetime of musical exploration in the saxophonist's own laconic admission, "I was always an independent cat," adding with a broader brush: "Like me, generations of musicians discovered through Fred the complex connections between music, personality and society. We were among the first to receive with alacrity Fred's message of commitment to the cultural and historical continuity of innovation; later it was heard around the world." **DB**

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BLUEPRINT **FOR FLIGHT**

By Dan Ouellette



Fly, from left: Mark Turner, Larry Grenadier and Jeff Ballard

ROBERT LEWIS

Halfway through a conversation with saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jeff Ballard about their band Fly, the notion of architecture comes up as a way of talking about the trio's compositional complexity. While listening on Ballard's iBook laptop to Fly's new album, *Sky & Country* (ECM), they discuss the structure of Turner's "Anandananda" as if they were marveling about an edifice that emerges from a traditional design but looks new and unique—think postmodern architect Frank Gehry, whose curvy, liquid-like masterpieces include Los Angeles' Walt Disney Concert Hall and Seattle's Experience Music Project.

Attuned to the jazz tradition, but stretching beyond its structural confines, Fly charts its course forward, defying the predictable compositional framework girded by a head at the beginning and end with hallways of improvisation in between.

"That's what we do as sidemen where you fall into the concept of bandleader with rhythm section," says Grenadier. "The whole idea of starting this band was a reaction to that. We make music that's a reflection of that reaction. It's not Mark playing, and then me following with a section before Jeff and I trade fours. The shape of our compositions provides opportunities for the three of us to be democratic. It's not the saxophone being out front, and the bass and drums accompanying. We share having the lead voice so that we can create an ensemble sound."

As a collective trio with two CDs under its belt and lots of touring dates since its 2004 genesis, Fly operates as a unit without a leader, per se. Talking with the band requires the presence of all three members, which poses a problem of logistics when they're not on tour together, especially since Ballard moved to Spain. But when you do get them in the same room, the result is a free-flowing discourse that mirrors their music.

"The deeper you listen, the more you can get out of it," says Ballard.

"It's subtle," says Grenadier.

"And potent," Turner adds. "There are connections between sections. You don't get moved around in our music in abrupt ways. You move through a sense of adventure."

"There's more landscape in each song," says Grenadier. "It's more involved than writing a tune. It's developing different sections within each piece to keep a listener's interest for 60 minutes."

"Nonjazz listeners as well as people with more trained ears often think that we're playing free, especially given that we're using non-chordal instruments," says Grenadier. "But it's

not as free as people assume. We're sensitive to wanting to have clarity so that the audience can relate to where we are in each tune. Without being patronizing to listeners, we're helping them into the music. But, of course, we also want to have a direct relationship to being in the moment at all times."

"We do a lot of hinting," says Ballard.

Fly began its search for *joie de vivre* jazz and freedom from straitjacket forms in 2000 when Ballard, the drummer in Chick Corea's *Origin*, participated in the leader's *Originations* recording project where each member of the band contributed his own works. Ballard wanted to create a trio, so he enlisted Grenadier, whom he knew from their teenage years growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, and Turner, a close friend from his New York days.

Their chemistry was so strong they decided to experiment with the trio as a side project separate from their mainstay gigs (for example, Turner with Kurt Rosenwinkel, Grenadier with Brad Mehldau). They toured and were pleased with what they were creating. However, they had no opportunity to record again until Steve Backer, VP of artist relations of the newly resuscitated Savoy Jazz label, contacted Turner when his contract with Warner Bros. expired. The saxophonist wasn't interested in a solo leader date, but mentioned his interest in the trio. Backer liked what he heard.

This was Grenadier and Ballard's first recording as leaders. The bassist told me then, "Jeff and I had been so involved in other people's music for so long, it was prime time for us to try out our own thing. After we did our live gigs as a trio, the timing felt right. We were going to be able to call our own sets instead of playing someone else's personality. There's nothing wrong with that. But we want to shape our own visions and come up with something that truly represents our own personalities."

Recording in a live setting, with all three in the same studio room, the trio crafted a batch of lyrical beauties. Ballard brought to the session his playful "Child's Play" based on a Ghanaian rhythm and his sublime ballad "Lone." Grenadier contributed the journey piece "Emergence/Resurgence," the funky "JJ" and the love song "State Of The Union." Turner brought to the date the three-part, multigroove tune "Stark." In addition to a Jimi Hendrix cover (an upbeat and spiced take on "Spanish Castle Magic"), the trio collaborated on the compelling three-section "Fly Mr. Freakjar," where each member performed frontline duty.

The tune also inspired the group's name. At the time, Turner said that the full name of the tune was considered, but they all opted for something shorter. Why not "Fly?"

"It sounded good, and it can have many meanings," he said. "The first thing I thought of was that street-talk phrase 'that's fly,' which means, that's cool. Then there's fly, as in soaring to the heights. That's what our music is like. Same with the insect fly that's jabbing and bobbing. There are a bunch of fly meanings that fit us. Plus, like our music, Fly has a little bit of mystery attached to it."

The self-titled CD arrived in 2004 and died on the vine.

The Savoy Jazz deal, Grenadier recalls, signed the band to a five-CD contract. But because of the lack of support, any new Fly outing was unlikely. However, the deal was voided because of the label's failure to get European distribution, and Fly began to pursue other options to document new material in the band's library.

"Fly played consistently in the last five years, touring when we weren't gigging with other people," says Grenadier. "We talked about making a new album a couple of years ago, but then we wondered how we were going to release it—by ourselves, or on another label. We had such a bad experience the first time out,

we were careful this time.”

They landed with ECM after Manfred Eicher expressed interest in signing the trio. “Manfred knows we’re a band and likes what we do,” says Grenadier. “He’s heard and recorded so many different types of music and he has studied ears. His input when we began to record the new album was very helpful.”

So, five years after recording its debut, Fly has returned with *Sky & Country*, produced by Eicher and recorded by James Farber (who also engineered the first CD). This time the trio members tracked in separate rooms to have

more control over the sound, while also maintaining a live feeling. “We play so much together that we’re mixing in a natural way when we play, even if we are in different rooms,” Grenadier says.

As for the vibe of the new CD, it’s *Fly* part 2, with a continuation of the same collaborative spirit and striking lyricism. Once again, each instrument is clearly spotlighted. In addition to tunes with an understated groove sensibility (including the only composition not specifically written for Fly, Turner’s “Dharma Days,” from his Warner Bros. album of the same

name), the music ranges from muse to whimsy (both vibes present in Ballard’s “Lady B.,” which opens the CD).

Turner describes the CD as being more “pastoral” than the previous outing. “Listening back to it, it’s prettier,” he says. “The melodies go through peaks and valleys. Plus, there are intros and outros.”

This is most obvious on his suite-like design “Anandananda,” which opens with a moving tenor prelude, continues with another intro that features a two-part harmony with Grenadier before delving deeper into liquid movement through different vistas. “Like many of our tunes,” Turner says, “this is a piece that ends in a place that you don’t expect based on how it started.”

“These are through-composed tunes,” says Ballard. “We composed them so that you have an event followed by another event.”

“It’s collective playing,” says Grenadier. “So, there may be a prelude where I would have the lead voice, either solo or contextual with the other instruments comping. Then we switch roles.”

Case in point: Grenadier’s “CJ” (named after his son Charles James), a pensive, largely balladic tune that opens with a solo bass part that Turner then enters with a slow, noir-like tenor melody. “What’s great about this composition is that Mark comps for me, playing the bass part while I’m playing pizzicato,” Grenadier says. In the second part of the piece, after a time break that Grenadier initiates with a quiet bass interlude, Turner re-enters on soprano saxophone. “I heard the second melody in this octave,” Grenadier says. “Plus, because it’s in a different range, it gives more room for the bass.”

It also affords Ballard the opportunity to bring his voice more fully into the mix. He says, “There’s so much space. I’m hitting the cymbals in a way where you can hear clearly all the notes I’m playing. So I have much more musical presence.”

The resulting outcome is unlike anything each band member expresses in other settings as support team players. “People always ask me, do you play differently with Fly than when you play with Brad [Mehldau]?” says Grenadier (Ballard is also in the group). “The difference I see is how each of us in Fly has a need for clarity in our music because we’re not playing chordal instruments. We don’t dumb down the music, but we up the responsibility. How can we be clearer without being obvious? That’s what’s fun about Fly.”

“You have to take time with Fly’s music,” says Ballard. “You have to hear how each tune develops. Then when you get into a tune, I’m told, it feels like a reward.”

It’s like sketching the blueprint of a building after it’s been constructed and explored, which is how a careful listener approaches all music. “Creating architecture happens all the time in jazz,” says Grenadier. “But with Fly we’re doing it in our own unique way.”

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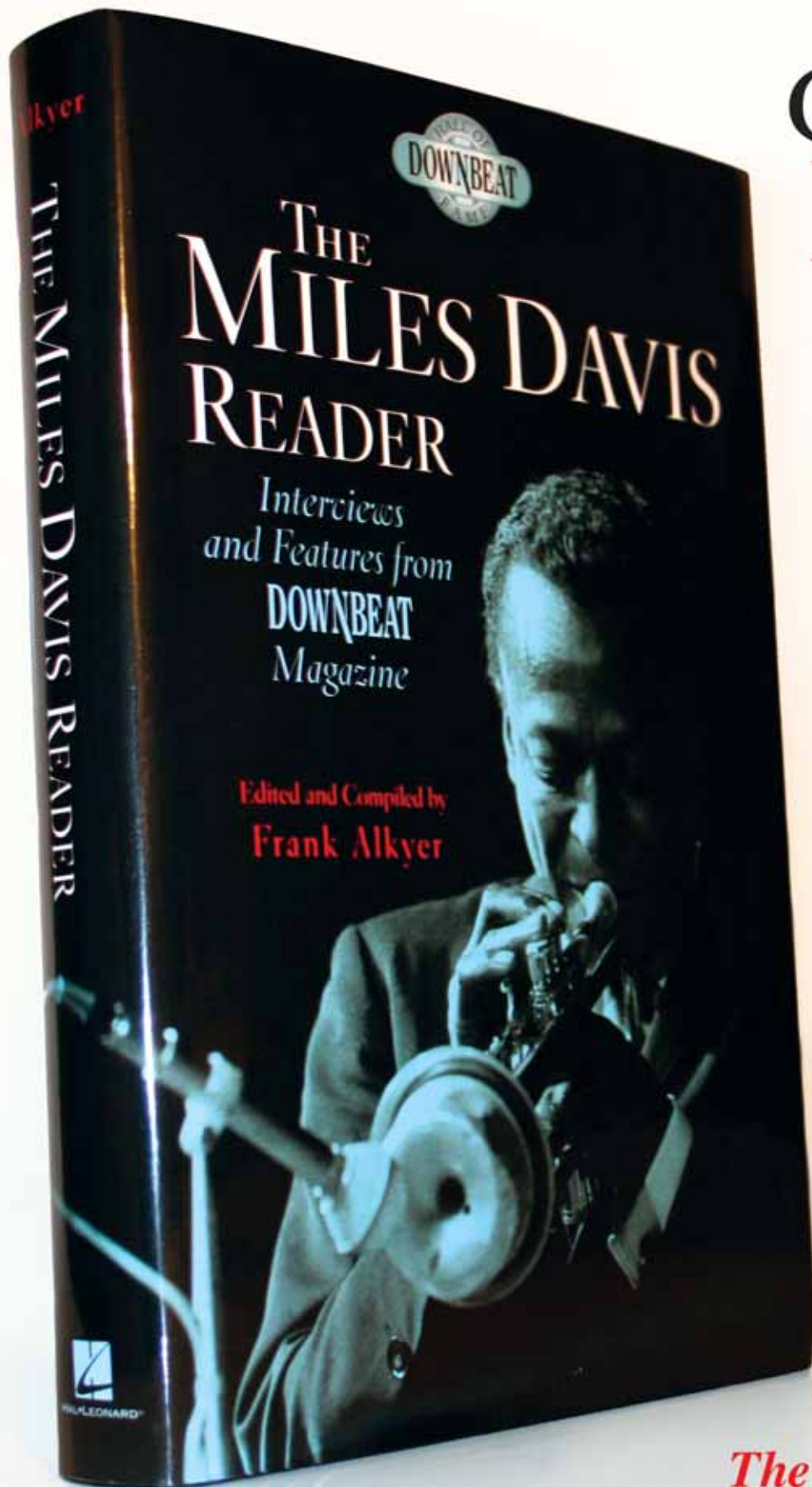
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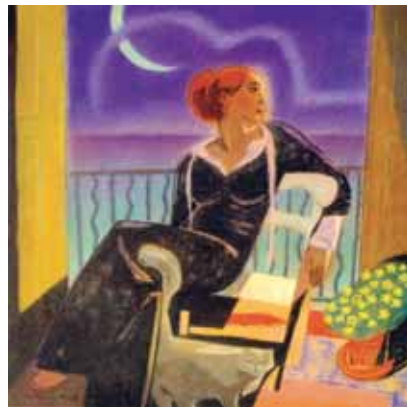


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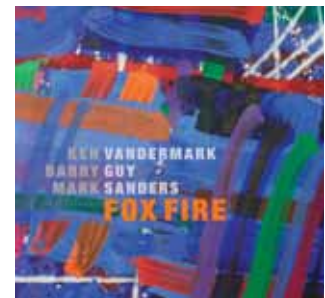
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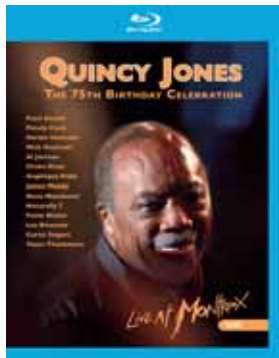
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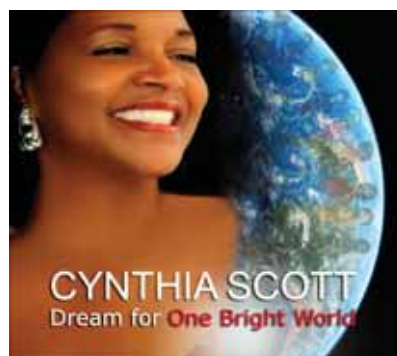
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Vibist Charles Returns from Life at Sea

When vibraphone player Teddy Charles headlined at the Village Vanguard in March 2008, it was the first time he had stood onstage at the New York jazz shrine since around 1963. Charles turned 80 just weeks after the booking, an age synonymous with scaling back. He is looking to do just the opposite.

"Playing the Vanguard was great," Charles said last summer from his home in Riverhead on Long Island, N.Y. "Because that was returning to the scene of the crime."

At the height of his career, Charles performed with Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, Aretha Franklin, Max Roach and many others. In addition, Charles earned a reputation in the 1950s for innovative compositions that incorporated dense tonality, modes and the 12-tone series. While Charles' absence from music rejuvenated his spirit, he discovered how aging had affected his chops. Charles cites painful arm and hand injuries that can make performing difficult.

"I am now playing like an old man," Charles lamented, "because I have a torn rotator cuff and advanced osteoarthritis in my left arm. I have the onset of carpal tunnel syndrome, which didn't affect me at first when I started playing. But right after the Vanguard, I started to have problems. I could tell right then and there that my chops were not physically up to where they should be."

Charles, who turned 81 in April, continues to push past these maladies. Since a booking in October 2007 at Smalls in Greenwich Village, he has played gigs that have ranged from small group outings to several featuring his tentet arrangements from the 1950s. He has become increasingly conscious of his legacy, which includes the technique of performing with two mallets in each hand. He developed the approach in the late 1940s while spending time with fellow vibraphone player Red Norvo in Los Angeles.

This approach made it possible to voice four-mallet chords that were, Charles said, "unlike everybody I ever heard at that time." Vibraphone players, he added, typically "played root, fifth and triads, and [with] maybe the melody on top." He attributes the flash point to a trio he led around 1950 that included a guitarist; he later worked alongside pianist Mal Waldron and arranger Gil Evans, who wrote specific parts for him.

"Of all the people I've heard playing [with] four mallets," Charles said, "I've never heard anybody else do that. They play more or less standard chords. That part of my technique is still pretty good, except for the fact that I have trouble turning my left wrist. I am inventing a different way to play those things."

Charles also appears on several recent record-



ings. In July 2008, he led his first studio session since the early 1960s. Smalls Records released the album *Dances With Bulls* in February; it features a handful of Charles' compositions, and also Mingus' "Nostalgia In Times Square." The lineup includes saxophonist and arranger Chris Byars, pianist Harold Danko, trombonist John Mosca, bassist Ari Roland and drummer Stefan Schatz. The vibist recorded a live broadcast in late 2008 in Amsterdam, and appears on Byars' forthcoming session for Steeplechase. Byars has tackled previous projects that have paid tribute to Lucky Thompson, Gigi Gryce and Jimmy Cleveland. Byars met Charles through Noal Cohen, a musician and jazz historian in New Jersey.

"Teddy is scrappy," Byars said. "Teddy's very, very much like a street fighter with mallets. He is so unpredictable. You can't follow him."

Byars received a commission from Chamber Music America to compose an extended composition for a large ensemble inspired by Charles' life and music. Byars premiered the work, *Bopography*, in June in Greenwich Village.

Charles turned his back on the jazz world in the early 1960s, a reaction to the music industry's overemphasis of rock 'n' roll. For roughly a dozen years Charles focused entirely on sailing.

"The spirit of adventure and Errol Flynn and

all that sort of thing," he recalled, "that really grabbed me. And not only that, we were getting paid very well to do it. I started going back and forth from New York to St. Thomas. I got so good at it it was sort of like a milk run."

Charles began performing again during the late 1970s in Old Saybrook, Ct. By the early 1980s, he owned a boatyard on City Island in the Bronx, N.Y. He gigged intermittently for most of the 1980s, notably with pianist Danko, before returning to sailing. He was making regular trips to Key West, Fla., up until the mid-1990s. "The gigs were few and far between, and I was so busy with the boats I didn't care," he said. He moved to Long Island, first to Greenport and then Riverhead, where jam sessions that included part-time musicians provided his sole outlet until he met Byars in 2007.

Charles suffers no delusions. The years away from the bandstand have taken their toll. "When I get up on the bandstand, it takes me maybe two sets to get going, or two nights to get going," he said. "You have to be constantly driven to create, because you don't want to hear yourself doing the same crap over and over again. All the clichés come out; the first hour or so you get them all out of the way, and then you start to do something."

—Eric Fine



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577 Records Boldly Blends Worldly Vision, Community Ideals

With so many musicians and only a small number of venues in New York City, finding opportunities to play has long been one of the many frustrations and hurdles of the musician's life there. The Italian-born drummer Federico Ughi gigged around the city in the years following a move to Brooklyn in 1999, but he yearned for some consistency. So in 2000 he began to present monthly concerts in his apartment, and the series quickly became a vibrant hang for some of the scene's most daring improvisers.

"When we gave up the apartment we didn't feel like stopping the operation," Ughi said.

He merely switched mediums, launching 577 Records—named after the pad's street number.

"It wasn't really planned, we had no business scheme," Ughi said. "My first CD came out on Slam Productions in England, but at the time I was 26 or something and every time I wanted to put out record I have to go through all of these blues, convincing people that what I'm doing is good. We didn't have much money or big plans, but things just came together."

In fact, the label's inaugural release—a duo with Ughi and veteran free jazz reedist/trumpeter Daniel Carter—happened only after the drummer met a fellow Italian, who happen to own a recording studio, on the subway after a gig late one night. Intrigued by Ughi's ideas, the engineer offered him a free session the next day. Since releasing *Astonishment* in 2001 the label has issued 14 more titles from an ever-expanding circle of like-minded players (including trumpeter Kirk Knuffke and reedists Ras Moshe, Stephen Gauci, and Sabir Mateen), but for the past few years the core of 577 has revolved around Ughi, Carter, bassist David Moss, and trumpeter Demian Richardson.

For Carter, who's been in New York since back in 1970, this community of players has been deeply inspiring.

"Probably I'm more on a 'higher level' in terms of having been around and recognition, but I myself need to play with people where the hunger to play is really the driving force," Carter said. "It's made me feel a rebirth of what I've been trying to do in the first place. It takes me a long time to work stuff out musically and on certain other levels there may not be the sense of the kind of time to go off on tangents or be making that many mistakes. I feel I need play-room, wiggle-room; room that inspires and encourages feeling real loose and courageous."

Ughi started 577 out of necessity, but he's been happy to cede the business concerns over to Polly Barnes, who came on as a partner a few years ago.



Big Group in Ponta Delgada: Joao Tavares and Gianna De Toni



"We've never borrowed money and we've run a tight ship, using the tools we have," Ughi said. "Sometimes things are rough; the recordings might not be perfect, but instead of stopping and doing something that doesn't represent us I think it's important to show what you've got. We keep going. It all starts from the community, with us, but Polly is making most of the decisions now. For a few years I was curating every single aspect of it. So the label is at a turning point in a way. I hope the history and esthetic will be maintained."

Ughi, Carter, and Richardson turn up on the recent *Big Group In Ponta Delgada*, a large band effort recorded live in the Açores, a group of islands off the coast of Portugal, during a jazz festival there.

"Rui Melo, who organized the festival, wondered what could be done as a workshop, and I

thought the most direct thing was to have us all play with the musicians," said Carter. "There were some players from the conservatory there, but there were also many other players, some younger, some older, coming from many other diverse musical directions and backgrounds, all open to freely improvising with each other."

In a sense the Big Group project only amplifies the spirit of the small group efforts on 577, with a disparate crew of musicians finding common cause in the pursuit of spontaneous creation. For Carter the experience has been consistently invigorating.

"This thing is so dynamic right now," Carter said "I'm trying to get a load of the fantastic musical breakthroughs that have been happening, playing with these guys. I'm still metabolizing it. For me it's a breakthrough in my musical life. A true renaissance." —Peter Margasak



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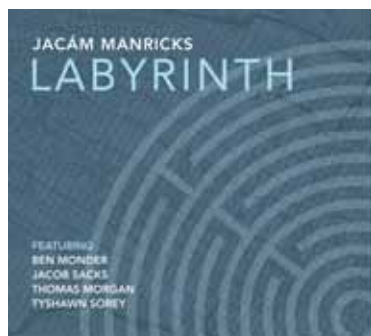
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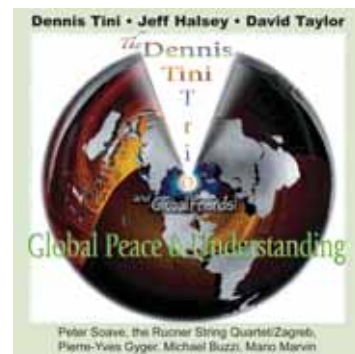
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JOHN ABBOTT

Kurt Elling

Dedicated To You

CONCORD 31314

★★★★

The Johnny Hartman–John Coltrane partnership left a small discography but a large shadow. On *Dedicated To You*, Kurt Elling and Ernie Watts further memorialize and enshrine that brief encounter—only six songs—in the best way possible: by being true to its essence while also taking it to a somewhat different place.

Hartman is moderately well remembered today as a crooner in the great Crosby–Sinatra–Bennett tradition, but even more so on the coat-tails of the cult of Coltrane, which is inclined to worship everything the saxophonist ever touched. That he touched Hartman does him credit. But their single *Impulse!* album in 1963 was definitely Hartman's show, not Coltrane's. He went to the American songbook, took a helping of Berlin, Rodgers, Strayhorn and three others, and laid down essentially straight interpretations. Hartman was the actor-balladeer, never the scat singer or improviser. Coltrane accompanied with a lyrical empathy that never fought the

moment.

Elling, whose light baritone has the basic downy softness of a traditional crooner, evokes the essential musicality Hartman brought to the material but with far less candlelight and romance. Elling, though restrained, plays to his own strength and takes a somewhat wider interpretative latitude. Hartman's "They Say It's Wonderful," for example, dripped with intimacy and seduction. Elling's is hip, sly and cool with a soft beat. Whereas Hartman created a consistent mood, Elling expands the range of the music. He flexes his virtuosity with a couple of octaves on "Lush Life" (sounding a trifle strained as he leaps up on the word "dive") and a bold falsetto climax on "Dedicated To You" as opposed to the slow sensual caress that was Hartman's specialty. But Elling's mission here is not to imitate but to interpret a famed one-time coupling of talent, something he has done with respect, yet integrity.

As part of the latitude he has allowed himself, Elling has added a string quartet to the mix. It slinks softly in the shadows, underpinning the music with a subtle but never intrusive formality. The counterpoint is especially well matched

to Elling on "My One And Only Love," by far his most intimate performance and the only one without his accompanying regular trio with Laurence Hobgood. The wonderful Ernie Watts is Coltrane's proxy, and he solos and accompanies with a crowded, double time individuality carved from the language of Coltrane.

With only six songs to work with, Elling necessarily supplements the program with a few extras, including a Watts solo piece on "What's New," a couple of Sinatra staples ("All Or Nothing At All" and "Nancy With The Laughing Face") and a warm reflection on the original session. The performance was recorded live early this year as part of Lincoln Center's American Songbook series.

—John McDonough

Dedicated To You: All Or Nothing At All; It's Easy To Remember; Dedicated To You; What's New; Lush Life; Autumn Serenade; Say It; They Say It's Wonderful; My One And Only Love; Nancy With The Laughing Face; You Are Too Beautiful. (56:04)

Personnel: Kurt Elling, vocals; Ernie Watts, saxophone; Lawrence Hobgood, piano; Clark Sommers, bass; Ulysses Owens, drums; Cornelius Dufallo, Mary Rowell, violin; Ralph Farris, viola; Dorothy Lawson, cello.

» Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Darcy James Argue's Secret Society

Infernal Machines

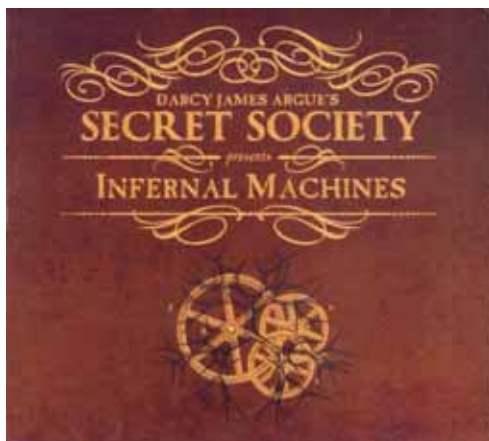
NEW AMSTERDAM 017

★★★★

Creating lots of liftoff while still giving nuance all the elbow room it needs—those are a couple goals of any big band leader who wants their

music to be both engaging and entertaining. Magali Souriau's Orchestra, John Hollenbeck's Big Band and Jentsch Group Large have all made moves toward these ends. But with *Infernal Machines* now here it's Darcy James Argue's Secret Society that's found the most luminous balance between the two. The Brooklyn-based Vancouver native has crafted several unique ways to bolster small thematic motifs with more rigorous action, making passages wax intimate and extroverted at once. Time and again he presents seemingly contradictory ideas side by side—without revealing schisms or neutering either component's value. As he presents a delicate foreground, a muscular phalanx of horns looms in the rear, ready to replace it.

All this makes the 18-member Secret Society's music rather addictive. Lots of composers have their music come around corners and leap out unexpectedly—in the ever contoured realm of big band music, surprise is key element. But Argue's strength is the way he avoids obvious exclamations. Yep, there are a few moments here when the trajectory can be deciphered early on, but that feeds us a handful of touchstones to savor while the more singular



responsible for the Reign of Terror. And Argue's a wit: I swear the clacks of drummer Jon Wikan's snare sound like a guillotine serving its cold justice.

There's a critical consensus around this disc, but few pundits are stressing just how gorgeous Argue's motifs are. "Obsidian Flow" is essentially a march toward clobbering time, but it manages to pick some daisies along the way. Muted brass, poignant reeds, sideways grooves, the last 10 seconds of "Zeno"—*Infernal Machines* is addictive not only for its architecture, but for its fetching way with color. It took the 33-year-old bandleader a while to make his recorded debut (there is lots of music and lots of ideas on his Secret Society site), but we'll be remembering it for quite some time.

—Jim Macnie

Infernal Machines: Phobos; Zeno; Transit; Redeye; Jacobin Club; Habeas Corpus; Obsidian Flow. (67:08)

Personnel: Darcy James Argue, composer, conductor, ring-leader; Erica vonKleist, Rob Wilkerson, Sam Sadigursky, Mark Small, Josh Sinton, saxophones; Seneca Black, Laurie Frink, Tom Goehring, Nadjie Noordhuis, Ingrid Jensen, trumpets; Mike Fahn, James Hirschfeld, Ryan Keberle, Jennifer Wharton, trombones; Sebastian Noelle, guitar; Mike Holober, piano, Rhodes; Matt Clohesy, bass; Jon Wickan, drums.

» Ordering info: newamsterdamrecords.com

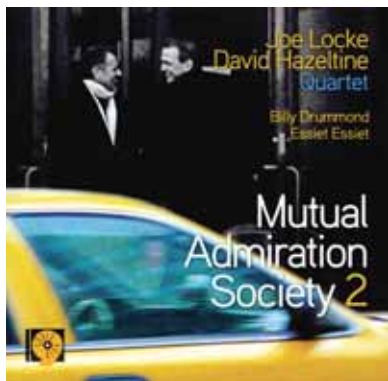
Joe Locke/David Hazeltine Quartet

Mutual Admiration Society 2

SHARP NINE RECORDS 1043

★★★★½

This dandy re-convo-cation of a quartet that first came together a decade ago features, as before, originals by each player but draws less from the Great American Songbook and more from jazz for the remainder of its raw material. A hard-hitting, no-nonsense blowing album, with angular, difficult tunes, 16th notes galore and a bent for intense, minor vamps, it is also pro-



foundly lyrical in spots, as the band pays close attention to texture, blend and dynamics. Ten years have made these players that much more sophisticated and mature, and their music demands a sophisticated, mature ear. This is an album for the hardcore jazz lover.

Locke and Hazeltine have markedly different styles—the vibist delivering a blizzard of notes, driving over the time; the pianist offering a lighter touch, laying behind the beat, adding a bluesy tremolo now and then. Locke somehow triumphs over the percussive and discrete separateness of the vibes' tone bars, always sounding fluid and

choices work their odd magic. The repeated patterns of "Jacobin Club" have it both ways: Their design logic is impeccable, but it's tough to predict which way the shadowy music will veer. No wonder it's named after a gaggle of French revolutionaries who ultimately wound up



Sexmob

Meets Medeski Live In Willisau 2006

THIRSTY EAR57189

★★★★½

The showman's dilemma: to go for time-worn tricks, or to try something more ambiguous and mysterious? Sexmob combines the two tasks, transforming time-worn tricks into something deeper, more durable, less obvious. They're not always successful in pulling the material away from its familiarity (and, in places, plain kitchiness), and they return to the same crowd-pleasing routines mercilessly. But with Steven Bernstein's restless energy and impish sense of play, they manage to make the knish worth swallowing whole.

Recorded at the Swiss jazz festival with John Medeski joining on organ, the disc is broken into three suites, each a medley with a particular center of gravity. Or perhaps lack of gravity, as a good-time air of light humor pervades. Taking cues from pastichers past—there are full pages from the Art Ensemble of Chicago and John Zorn playbooks here—the stylistic mélange creates its own system of ten-

roundly contoured, even when flying at full speed. He and Hazeltine hook up beautifully on ensembles—vibes on top, Hazeltine's delicious voicings below.

I particularly like the aptly titled opener, "Pharaoh Joy," a nod to Pharoah Sanders in his North African period (think "Hum Allah"), which switches back and forth between a modal vamp and bright swing time. Jimmy Rowles' hauntingly beautiful ballad "The Peacocks" receives a gorgeous treatment, with Hazeltine skittering into a wild ride. The clever "Twelve"—inspired, Locke says in his notes, by John Coltrane's "Miles Mode"—presents with declarative, powerful energy a 12-tone row in two iterations followed by a suspenseful snare solo by the always supportive Billy Drummond, then it's off to the races on "Giant Steps" changes. Locke's chipper "What's Not To Love" (based on Cole Porter's "Everything

The HOT Box

sions and releases, a Prince tune subtly arising out of a New Orleans beat subtending the folk tune “Little Liza Jane,” exploring unforeseen affinities, turning to a grinding funk with sputtering alto, then shape-shifting to the World War I-era song “How ’Ya Gonna Keep ’Em Down On The Farm (After They’ve Seen Paree)?”

The second suite commences with the first of several adaptations of soundtrack music by John Barry, “This Never Happened Darling To The Other Guy,” with glacial organ chords shattered by a punchy, angular theme, then some beautiful slide trumpet by Bernstein and slithery alto by Briggan Krauss, emptying into Basie’s “Blue And Sentimental,” played gently at first, winding up bodaciously. Bassist Tony Scherr and drummer Kenny Wollesen (who adds very agreeable balaphon here and there) handle all the transitions effortlessly, even the sneaky way Prince’s “Darling Nikki” is introduced, with Medeski’s encoded bursts of Sun Ra organ action spattering their mounting motif.

Where other po-mo showbands, like the Bad Plus and Medeski’s main outfit, often leave me feeling unfulfilled, Sexmob delivers more lasting entertainment. The final Willisau suite, which starts with two James Bond scores (“Odd Job,” which is the theme from *Goldfinger*, and “You Only Live Twice”), feels like it could go the easy route, playing for cheap thrills and little laughs, but it’s too good for that, too sensitive to reduce itself to the LCD. —John Corbett

Sexmob Meets Medeski Live In Willisau 2006: Mob Rule Invocation; Mob Rule 1; Black And Tan Fantasy; Mob Rule 2/Little Liza Jane; Sign O The Times; Down On The Farm; This Never Happened To The Other Guy; Mob Rule 3; This Never Happened Part 2; Blue And Sentimental; Kenny Supreme; Darling Nikki; Odd Job; You Only Live Twice; Mob Rule 4; Artie Shaw. (63:29)

Personnel: Steven Bernstein, slide trumpet; John Medeski, organ; Briggan Krauss, alto saxophone; Tony Scherr, bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums.

» Ordering info: thirstyear.com

I Love”) highlights the singing quality of Locke’s vibes. Stevie Wonder’s “If It’s Magic” is tenderly reharmonized, romance intact, and the closer, “Blues For Buddy” (written for the late vibist Buddy Montgomery, who was still alive when this was recorded), bookends this joyous musical celebration.

A couple of quibbles. On Hazeltine’s “One For Reedy Ree” (for the late drummer Tony Reedus), the swing-time solos don’t have much to do with the vamping melody; Locke’s “Convocation” is a bit oblique, more of an excuse to blow. But overall, this is a fine album. —Paul de Barros

Mutual Admiration Society 2: Pharaoh Joy; The Peacocks; One For Reedy Ree; Twelve; What’s Not To Love?; Convocation; If It’s Magic; Blues For Buddy. (54:29)

Personnel: Joe Locke, vibes; David Hazeltine, piano; Essiet Essiet, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.

» Ordering info: sharpnine.com

CDs	CRMCs »	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Kurt Elling <i>Dedicated To You</i>		★★★★	★★★½	★★★	★★½
Darcy James Argue’s Secret Society <i>Infernal Machines</i>		★★★½	★★★½	★★★★	★★★
Sexmob <i>Meets Medeski Live In Willisau 2006</i>		★★	★★★½	★★★½	★★★
Joe Locke/David Hazeltine Quartet <i>Mutual Admiration Society 2</i>		★★★★	★★★½	★★★	★★★½

Critics’ Comments

Kurt Elling, *Dedicated To You*

When he’s singing the songs, not telling stories or scatting, Elling makes some wonderful music. He has a rare tool, silky and giant, and the dexterity to fashion something unique out of it, with modern soul twists in the phraseology that shouldn’t work, but most often do. This project is largely about the songs, which make a solid platform, though the dedication calls attention to the fact that where Hartman’s approach was sheer humility, Elling’s is steeped in ego. —John Corbett

The reedy-voiced Chicago hipster has made a creative and thoughtful translation of a classic album—I especially like the string writing for the quartet, Ethel—but with the exception of the quietly simple “Autumn Serenade,” the music—like Elling—always seems to be drawing attention to itself, rather than the message it’s so earnestly trying to send. —Paul de Barros

I appreciate the way the intrepid singer bends his lines—Elling keeps improv in the front of his mind. But occasionally, it’s too much sugar for a dime. There’s something overly elaborate about his choices here that stiffens several sections—could it be the string quartet? Sweet Ernie Watts maneuvers, though. —Jim Macnie

Darcy James Argue’s Secret Society, *Infernal Machines*

With his throbbing beats, drones, brass choirs, space-age eeriness and billowing clouds of sound, Argue is clearly an original. His wide-open settings allow ample breathing room for a wealth of young talent—Jon Wikan, Ingrid Jensen, Erika Von Kleist, Ryan Keberle. But some of these tracks flirt dangerously close to the melodrama and false grandeur of art rock. —Paul de Barros

Argue’s intent to retool the big band to contemporary specs is ambitious, intriguing, probably doomed, but still worth hearing. The suite has energy up front, (“Zeno” is the best), pauses in an echo chamber of cosmic guitar, then slinks with cautious restraint to a reinvigorated end. —John McDonough

Minimalist repetitions, indie rock riffs, jazz orchestrations—Argue’s compositional and arrangerly methodology is a stylistic appropriation of these and other resources. The necessity of transforming the materials to fit them together is *Infernal Machines’* basic nut, and it’s handled with panache. —John Corbett

Sexmob, *Meets Medeski Live In Willisau 2006*

Listening to this live show makes me want to have been there—like their esthetic forebears the Art Ensemble, they’ve always been a fun outfit to watch. Their connection with Medeski proves how quickly fellow travelers can fall into line. It used to be their breadth that was impressive; these days it’s their depth. —Jim Macnie

I wish they’d done a bit more than “meet.” Medeski doesn’t solo half enough on this rambunctious, raucous, irreverent, live ramble, but everyone else does, and it’s mostly a treat. “Black And Tan Fantasy” lives up to everything the band has been saying about making jazz a party music again. —Paul de Barros

Sexmob, the more dangerous alter ego to Bernstein’s Millennial Territory band (see March 2009 “Hot Box”), is an act that’s more self-aware and ordered than it might wish you to think—but still an act. Music is its means to the higher art of attitude where the SoHo sensibility typically resides. Much mockery and slapstick. Roguishly amusing, perhaps. —John McDonough

Joe Locke/David Hazeltine Quartet, *Mutual Admiration Society 2*

A shockingly straight and uncluttered jazz set. With no gimmicks, no pretences and no ambitions to startle the world, it seems almost a throwback. But there’s nothing retro in Locke and Hazeltine, who find abundant fresh air in the simplicity of a relaxed rapport and a lightly swinging appeal. —John McDonough

Nothing too splashy or ostentatious, also nothing earth-moving, but very tuned-in quartet playing attractive, accomplished mainstream jazz with a dose of soul. Continued kudos to Billy Drummond for uplifting every session he’s on. —John Corbett

The two bosses definitely connect—on some of these tunes their lines truly dance. But in a polyglot world, their adherence to a straightahead lingo—regardless of the grace with which it’s rendered—seems overly orthodox and a tad limiting. —Jim Macnie

**Ellery Eskelin/
Andrea Parkins/
Jim Black**

*One Great Night ...
Live*

HATOLOGY 683

★★★★

**Ellery Eskelin/
Sylvie
Courvoisier**

Every So Often

PRIME SOURCE 5010

★★★★



Ellery Eskelin figured out a long time ago that playing jazz the same old way was not just an artistic dead end, but a denial of the musical world around him. His solution was the trio with Andrea Parkins and Jim Black, which challenged convention not only with its unusual configuration—Parkins' main instrument is an accordion amplified after the fashion of Jimi Hendrix, her second a sampler—but what Eskelin had them play.

Rather than use composed heads as launch pads for solos or plunge headlong into unfettered improvisation, he embraces disruption by placing contrasting written and freely improvised events side by side. The juxtapositions work more like filmic jump-cuts or visual collages than conventionally programmatic suites. And while the trio plunders genres as disparate as bebop, samba, alternative rock and even fusion, they scrutinize each element with so con-

centrated a gaze that it melts like wax, all the better to twist it into a barely recognizable distortion. Combine these formal challenges with Eskelin's highly individual approach to his horn, which applies a marvelous tonal command across the registers to elongated non-repeating lines that zig where you expect them

to zag, and you've got a band that sounds like none other. Ironically, the trio's singularity has imposed its own challenge: how to keep growing, and not just keep sounding different? Eskelin's solution has been to add players, most notably English singer Jessica Constable. *One Great Night ... Live*, which was recorded in late 2007 at a one-off gig in Baltimore that capped a European tour with Constable, is the trio's first unaugmented recording since 2002's magnificent *Arcanum Moderne*. "For No Good Reason" is the album's grandest performance, dissolving effortlessly from music box environments to quizzical balladry to a hint of Jamaican dub; Parkins' sampler renders cinematic sound effects and pop gestures equally aptly.

But you needn't forgo listening to Eskelin if you can't warm up to the trio's idiosyncratic sound. *Every So Often* is a completely impro-

vised encounter with the Swiss-born, New York-based pianist Sylvie Courvoisier. She's hardly hidebound in her approach to her instrument; she makes entirely persuasive forays into her keyboard's innards and uses preparations to turn it into a percussion instrument. She also makes bold, finely articulated statements in a more conventional fashion, sounding as indebted to classical music as jazz.

Eskelin takes to this setting, which is less rhythmically exacting but more harmonically restrictive, with grace. He works in his horn's higher registers, sounding at times like a more patient but equally fluid Evan Parker. Courvoisier and Eskelin worked together for a while before they made this record, and it shows; despite their dissimilar backgrounds, they're quite compatible and even generous partners who understand how to balance complementarity with individual statement. Key to this record's success is its recording quality, which is clear and faithful.

—Bill Meyer

One Great Night ... Live: The Decider; For No Good Reason; Coordinated Universal Time; Split The Difference; Instant Counterpoint; I Should Have Known; Half A Chance. (69:13)

Personnel: Ellery Eskelin, tenor saxophone; Andrea Parkins, accordion, electric piano, organ, laptop sampler, grand piano; Jim Black, drums, percussion.

» Ordering info: hathut.com

Every So Often: Moderato Cantabile; Architectural; A Distant Place; Every So Often; Open Channel; Accidentals; Wave Off; Blind Spot; Processing. (60:03)

Personnel: Ellery Eskelin, tenor saxophone; Sylvie Courvoisier, piano.

» Ordering info: <http://home.earthlink.net/~eskelin/order.html>

**Kyle Asche
Organ Trio**

Blues For Mel

TIPPIN' RECORDS 1006

★★★

**Jermaine
Landsberger**

Gettin' Blazed

RESONANCE RECORDS 1009

★★½



Those interested in empty, pyrotechnic bombast should look elsewhere, whereas those in search of a mature record showcasing solid grooves, inventive melodies and an understated funkiness should look no further than the Kyle Asche Organ Trio's *Blues For Mel*.

Guitarist Asche, along with organist Mel Rhyne, who recorded several records with Wes Montgomery, consistently churn out solid, well constructed solos. Asche has a keen melodic imagination, and he effectively develops his melodies into substantive statements by framing them in question/answer units, modifying them sequentially, or by combining both methods. He rarely plays what sound like pre-packaged licks, thus his solos have an original, organic feel.

On Rhyne's medium-paced groover "Killer Ray," Asche elaborates his ideas and builds his

solo all while slowly ratcheting up the nastiness. Rhyne, whose percussive touch and slightly staccato articulation complements Asche's more relaxed and legato phrasing, isn't afraid to jump into a solo burning, as on "Nite Vidual"; he also exhibits a slower, more deliberate, measured style in which he uses ample space to set off his phrases—especially on the ballads "I Thought About You" and "Too Late Now." Drummer George Fludas is always locked in with Asche and Rhyne, and he contributes fine solos on "Snapshot" and "Nite Vidual."

Organist Jermaine Landsberger's *Gettin' Blazed* is in a completely different bag. Landsberger, making his U.S. recording debut, switched from piano to organ in 2001, thus his organ style is more pianistic, as he leaves the bass lines to bassist James Genus. *Gettin' Blazed* draws on stylistically varied material including a fusion-pop treatment of Django Reinhardt's "Babik," Horace Silver's "Filthy McNasty" (which features strong solos from Landsberger, tenor saxophonist Gary Meek, Genus and guitarist Andreas Öberg) and an uptempo swing take of Stevie Wonder's "Another Star."

Although the Latin "Brazilian People" has a

quasi-smooth jazz feel that stems from Meek's flute melody doubled with Landsberger and the presence of Genus' electric bass, its solos are pure bebop. Landsberger's solos on everything besides "Ballada Para J" and his "Night Ballad" are generally of the right-hand, single-note burning variety, as are Öberg's. Pat Martino contributes two excellent nimble guitar solos on the waltz "Sno' Peas" and "Brazilian People," and Landsberger and Öberg tear through his "Three Base Hit." *Gettin' Blazed* showcases a talented organist with diverse musical influences.

—Chris Robinson

Blues For Mel: Blues For Mel; Gentle Rain; Snapshot; I Thought About You; Nite Vidual; Killer Ray; Watch What Happens; Swedish Schnapps; Too Late Now; Forget New York; Who Can I Turn To?; Killer Ray (bonus radio edit). (63:36)

Personnel: Kyle Asche, guitar; Melvin Rhyne, organ; George Fludas, drums.

» Ordering info: tippinrecords.com

Gettin' Blazed: Sno' Peas; Brazilian People; Ballada Para J; Three Base Hit; Valse Manouche; Romance; Babik; Another Star; Night Ballad; Filthy McNasty. (50:11)

Personnel: Jermaine Landsberger, Hammond B-3, Fender Rhodes; Pat Martino, guitar (1, 2, 6); Andreas Öberg, guitar; James Genus, bass; Harvey Mason, drums; Gary Meek, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute (1, 2, 9, 10); Kuno Schmid, synthesizer, Fender Rhodes.

» Ordering info: resonancerecords.org

Jacques Loussier

Plays Bach: The 50th Anniversary Recording

TELARC 83693
★★★★

You could say that Jacques Loussier has gotten plenty of mileage out of a great idea. The time was right, in the late 1950s, for mixing elements of classical music and jazz in a sleek chamber setting. These particular tracks represent the work of his second Play Bach Trio, with two younger musicians, Vincent Charbonnier and André Arpino, taking the place of the bassist and drummer from of the original group.

As a result, these selections lack the edgy novelty of the idea as explored by Loussier in the late '50s. Its absence, however, makes the point that he has accomplished his mission, if that mission was to draw from disparate traditions, sacrificing none of the attributes of either, to come up with something new. He succeeded in part because of the linear nature of both Baroque structure and jazz improvisation; counterpoint, like a horn solo, unfolds horizontally.

Sometimes he follows a fairly literal



approach. His straightforward (and masterful) reading of the "Partita In E Major" is undistracted but nonetheless enhanced by very discreet inferences from Arpino's cymbal ride. Similarly, on the "Invention For Two Voices," the composition is essentially intact until a blowing section allows the musicians to run with its written motifs before bringing it home with a literal final cadence.

But we also have the "Minuet In G Major," in which Loussier's left hand moves from a bit of Bach's written text through delicate chord sequences to moments where the two coexist, organic and in the moment; it recalls what Vince Guaraldi sought to achieve in his "Peanuts" music, though it ascends to a level way above charm or nostalgia. Here, and in nearly every moment of this disc, we have the transformation of Loussier's idea into something beautiful, even magical, and enduring.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

Jacques Loussier Plays Bach: The 50th Anniversary Recording: Partita In E Major; Invention For Two Voices, No. 8; Siciliana In G Minor; Vivace From Concerto In C Minor; Toccata And Fugue In C Minor (Overture, Adagio, Fugue); Minuet In G Major; Prelude No. 2 In C Minor; Chromatic Fantasy; Chorale No. 1 "Sleepers Awake." (53:00)

Personnel: Jacques Loussier, piano; Vincent Charbonnier, bass; André Arpino, drums.

» Ordering info: telarc.com

Hank Jones/ Frank Wess

Hank And Frank II
LINEAGE 106
★★

Maybe it's wrong, but people tend to listen to young and seasoned artists differently. With newer performers, we want something unexpected. We hope for excitement. With the old masters, "excitement" seldom heads the list of common anticipations, except in the sense that it's a thrill to see someone with some history to his or her name. And so we listen to the long-established greats with respect as well as a little charity.

Certainly respect is merited, but as Hank Jones and Frank Wess stroll through *Hank And Frank II* like two friends revisiting the neighborhood where they grew up, the question of charity is addressed more uncomfortably. It's not that they do anything embarrassing, but neither is there much that suggests the magnitude of their legacies. Tempos adhere to a comfortable middle range, somewhere between an amble and a power walk. Arrangements are loose enough to barely qualify as arrangements: Jones takes the verses, Wess plays the bridge, Jones comes back in, guitarist Ilya Lushtak fills unobtrusively and takes a solo of his own, etc. Every now and then



it's a little ragged, as on "Ill Wind," where drummer Mickey Roker seems to miss the cue for the finish.

It's all listenable but maybe a little sad. One can take this music in as one takes in a relative for a short stay; once it's over, not much has changed and you're not in a hurry to replay the experience. Or one can ask how this album would touch us

if we'd never heard of these performers.

The awkwardness of this question magnifies as soon as Marion Cowings starts to sing. He's a veteran, too, but unlike the instrumentalists he asserts himself forcefully into the music. With the quartet on "If I Were A Bell," he flaunts old-school phrasing but also nears the annoyance threshold as he chokes several short words and wrings a few others dry with a grating and somewhat wavering sustain. Despite his command of the style, his delivery tests the listener's charitable inclinations even more than anything his colleagues play.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

Hank And Frank II: Sunday; Lord Prepare Me; More Than You Know; If I Were A Bell; I Had the Craziest Dream; When Your Lover Has Gone; Chasing The Bird; Ill Wind; Jordu; The First Time I Saw Ella; Quintessence; You Don't Know What Love Is; Stay as Sweet as You Are; For All We Know; I'll Be Seeing You (67:33)

Personnel: Hank Jones, piano; Frank Wess, tenor sax, flute; Ilya Lushtak, guitar; John Webber, bass; Mickey Roker, drums; Marion Cowings, vocals.

» Ordering info: lineagerecords.com

DONNY McCASLIN
DECLARATION
In Stores August 11, 2009
Sunnyside SSC 1218

On the front line of the contemporary jazz scene for over a decade, McCaslin has proven his worth as a creative player with astonishing technical facility and a writer with wit and ambition. *DECLARATION* presents a collection of new songs all written by McCaslin and a band made up of his highly regarded peers. The themes are varied as songs travel from expressive modern jazz and Latin tinged burners to highly orchestrated chamber pieces featuring a brass quartet. Donny McCaslin truly gives his all on *DECLARATION*, a record that will make listeners really take notice.

AARON CHOULAI
RANU
In Stores August 18, 2009
Sunnyside SSC 1234

Choulai's new recording *RANU* illustrates the depth of his talent and that of his Australia based trio that includes bassist Sam Anning and either drummer Ben Vanderwal or Rory McDugall. Originally from Papua, New Guinea, Choulai has called Australia, New York City and Japan home. The recording includes six original compositions along with four modern classics including pieces by Neil Young and Radiohead.

www.sunnysiderecords.com

Christian McBride & Inside Straight

Kind Of Brown
MACK AVENUE 1047

★★★★½

If you're listening for any ties to Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue* here, you'll be hard-pressed. Christian McBride's latest title suggests more a play on words than anything else. And his Inside Straight band is all about playing inside and, well, straight, as in straightahead. Straight-ahead, in this case, allows for a few side trips off the beaten swing path, e.g., the funk flavors of "Brother Mister," which opens the set, and the lyrical Latin bent of "Starbeam." But mostly, the band shines when it's all about the swinging groove, as when McBride starts off "Theme For Kareem" with one of his many exceptional solos.

Kind Of Brown is laced with a blues feeling if not the blues. In this spirit, McBride's production creates a setting where every player gets into the act as if to make a simple statement and then moves off center stage. Shades of the classic John Coltrane Quartet are heard in the bridges and beyond with the medium-tempo swinger "Rainbow Wheel," pianist Eric Reed's



McCoy Tyner-esque touches full and inspired, saxist Steve Wilson's bright alto a deft counterweight, everything suddenly buttressed by more soloing from McBride. Indeed, the arrangements keep the listener engaged, creating the picture of an improvising band enveloped by a fluid structure that keeps things moving inside an invisible network of interactions, each song mixing up who comes next.

And just when one thinks the sound of the band is geared around Wilson's horn and Warren Wolf Jr.'s vibes—the two helping to define many of the songs' theme statements—it's McBride's ever-present touch and Reed's supportive playing that come to the fore.

With Carl Allen's active but never overbearing drumming, *Inside Straight* is the picture of a band seemingly made for each other. Paradoxically, *Inside Straight*'s cohesiveness can also be a drawback, their obvious professionalism on display across 10 listenable but oft-times nondescript tunes. McBride's bass playing ultimately steals the show. —John Ephland

Kind Of Brown: Brother Mister; Theme For Kareem; Rainbow Wheel; Starbeam; Used Ta Could; The Shade Of The Cedar Tree; Pursuit Of Peace; Uncle James; Stick & Move; Where Are You? (6:42)

Personnel: Christian McBride, bass; Carl Allen, drums; Eric Scott Reed, piano; Steve Wilson, saxophone; Warren Wolf Jr., vibes.

» Ordering info: mackavenue.com

Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters

Living In The Light

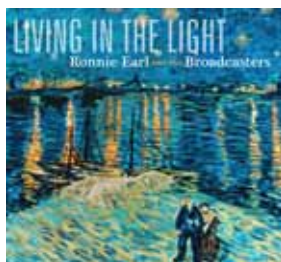
STONY PLAIN 1340

★★★★½

On his new studio album, Earl makes his blues-and-more guitar music unfold at a junction of deeply felt emotion and moral uprightness. As always, he's in quest of transcendence, and it appears that he does "live in the light" for more than hour by using his old Stratocasters to challenge and rise above the dark inner turbulence he knows.

Pitting high register against low, contrasting shaken single notes with chords, channeling riffs as if in supernatural communion with blues, soul and jazz heroes in Elysian Fields above, Earl keeps seven instrumentals fresh and irresistible over many listens. Each shuffle, boogie, or slow groove has an emotional touchstone: a physician ("S. O. S."); a recently departed, dear-to-his-heart colleague ("Blues For Fathead"); his wife ("Donna Lee"); Otis Rush's Chicago ("Blues For The South Side"); even the waterway celebrated by Thoreau and the transcendentalists that flows near his home in rural Massachusetts ("River Charles Blues"). Earl is ever so grateful for the people and nature in his life.

Living In The Light differs from the albums Earl made earlier this decade by having a singer



out front (he's employed a gospel group before, and here again on Bob Dylan's "What Can I Do For You?"). Earl's close friend Kim Wilson lends uninteresting, strained vocals to three straight blues, including Earl's open-wound Holocaust song, "Child Of A Survivor."

Dave Keller, a singer-guitarist based in Vermont, has sincerity in reserve, but he doesn't fare any better than Wilson when vocalizing Earl's peace-anthem "Love, Love, Love" and Dylan's "What Can I Do For You?" Well, who might match the outstanding sensitivity of Earl's guitar in the former song and contribute marvelous uplift to the latter? Absentees Darrell Nulisch, Susan Tedeschi and Mighty Sam McClain. Totally in agreement with Earl and his keen sense of musical spirituality is fine drummer Lorne Entress—a committed, long-term member of Earl's flock. —Frank-John Hadley

Living In The Light: Love, Love, Love; S. O. S.; Take A Little Walk With Me; River Charles Blues; What Can I Do For You?; Recovery Blues; Blues For Fathead; Child Of A Survivor; Blues For The South Side; Ain't Nobody's Business; Donna Lee; Pastorale. (70:19)

Personnel: Ronnie Earl, guitar; Dave Limina, Hammond B-3 organ, piano; Jim Mouradian, bass; Lorne Entress, drums; Kim Wilson, harmonica and vocals (3, 8, 11); Dave Keller, vocals (1, 5); David Maxwell, piano (3, 8); Rod Carey, bass (8); Jason James, second guitar (4); church choir (5).

» Ordering info: stonyplainrecords.com



Bobby Broom

Plays For Monk

ORIGIN 82534

★★★★

Thelonious Monk's music—with its quirky and challenging melodies, compelling progressions and traces of humor and poignancy running through everything—is the gift that keeps on giving. His tunes, in the right hands, can sound eternally fresh. So it's no big surprise that well-traveled guitarist Bobby Broom (a regular with Sonny Rollins, Dr. John and Chicago's Deep Blue Organ Trio) is handily able to turn 10 pieces written by or associated with Monk into small gems of musical discovery.

The cover of *Plays For Monk* is a nod to the art from the 1957 album *Monk's Music*, with Broom's guitar placed in the spot Monk occupied on the old cover. Joined by regular trio mates Dennis Carroll on bass and Kobie Watkins on drums, Broom takes on only one piece from that recording, a gorgeous, carefully sculpted rendition of the melancholy infused ballad "Ruby, My Dear." He stretches his sprawling, bluesy lines over the slow-ticking rhythm section, staying just behind the beat for maximum tension-and-release pleasure.

Broom skips some of the most-played Monk tunes (like "Round Midnight" and "Straight, No Chaser") in favor of others, like gently twisting opener "Ask Me Now," which opens up for Carroll's conversant bass solo; the tricky, brushes-sizzling "Work," complete with a dancing fours-trading section with Watkins; and a parade-marching "Bemsha Swing." The trio fronts "In Walked Bud" with 16 bars of grinding groove work, and Broom spikes the up-tempo "Rhythm-a-ning" with a surprising chord substitution. He caps the set with a shimmering solo-guitar reading of the standard "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," a mesmerizing and inventive rendition that calls for more.

—Philip Booth

Plays For Monk: Ask Me Now; Evidence; Ruby, My Dear; In Walked Bud; Lulu's Back In Town; Reflections; Work; Rhythm-a-ning; Bemsha Swing; Smoke Gets In Your Eyes. (66:41)

Personnel: Bobby Broom, guitar; Dennis Carroll, bass; Kobie Watkins, drums.

» Ordering info: origin-records.com

Global Keys

Recorded in the Maybeck studio in Northern California that produced so many great-sounding piano recordings, **Under The Water** (Libra 202-024; 54:24) ★★★★★ presents a gamut of pianistic approaches by Satoko Fujii and Myra Melford. In three duets, the women merge their voices, trading soundboard percussion, inside-the-piano effects and swirling keyboard techniques. Alone, the staggeringly prolific Fujii varies dynamics widely, jump-cutting from a fierce, free barrage to a sprinkle of single, crystalline notes. Melford favors more propulsion, playing against a bass motif before unleashing waves of rapid counter-motion. Sometimes surfing crests of sound, other times diving deep into the darkness, the musicians explore every aspect of the water theme.

Ordering info: www2s.biglobe.ne.jp/~Libra/

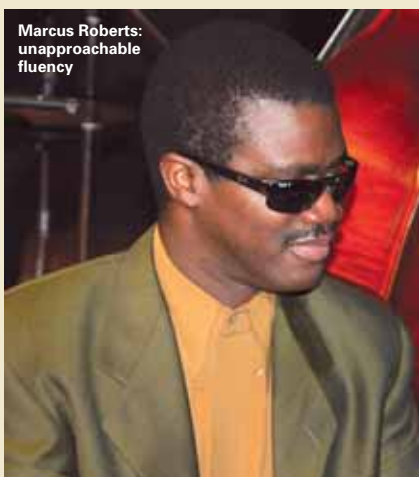
Journeyman pianist Rick Germanson has played with a wide range of leaders—from Jimmy Cobb to Frank Lacy—so it's no surprise that **Off The Cuff** (Owl 127; 53:15) ★★★ covers a diverse array of styles and moods. For buoyancy, there's the burning opener, "Quagmire," and the bop-styled "Brick," built on the chords of "You And The Night And The Music." For pathos, there's a counter-intuitively melancholic take on Freddie Hubbard's "Up Jumped Spring," recorded just days after the trumpeter's death and all the more poignant for the presence of Hub's longtime drummer, Louis Hayes.

Ordering info: owlstudios.com

There is no shortage of intensity on **Emerge** (BJU 006; 52:03) ★★★ but the trio of pianist Daniel Kelly, bassist Chris Tarry and drummer Jordan Perlson don't do much original with all that power. On "Obfyr" and "Michelangelo's Uncarved Block" they sound like they're channeling The Bad Plus, while "Anima/Animus" mines Chick Corea's Latin-meets-fusion vein. "Song For Katherine" and the prog-rocker "Canary Effect" are more effective, showcasing Tarry's tough, melodic electric bass. The slow burn of "Transience"—a perfect setting for Kelly's spare playing—illustrates another of the band's strong suits.

Ordering info: bjurecords.com

Australian pianist Barney McAll plays with a clean articulation and melodic determination that suggests Keith Jarrett, and Kurt Rosenwinkel's stinging guitar work throughout **Flashbacks** (Self-Released; 57:36) ★★★½ is an ideal match—reminiscent of the late Sam Brown's work with



Marcus Roberts: unapproachable fluency

SHOREFIRE MEDIA

Jarrett on Expectations in 1972. There is also something of a throwback vibe to the easy confluence of acoustic and electric instruments, as well as to the aggressive slam that "Red And Black Shifts" delivers. McAll writes lyrically compelling lines and sets them against a variety of rhythmic movement.

Ordering info: barneymcall.com

To state the obvious, Marcus Roberts has a fluency at the piano that few can approach. What's more, his 14-year-old trio with drummer Jason Marsalis and bassist Roland Guerin has the fluidity that only long hours on the bandstand can build. That stated, **New Orleans Meets Harlem, Vol. 1** (J-Master; 65:54) ★★★½ would be a lot more fun if Roberts wasn't trying so hard to illustrate both of those realities, in addition to the links between early New Orleans piano and post-war Northern styles. Roberts and company shift gears more often than an F1 driver, throwing every stylistic tic and trick into the mix, proving that even the best professor can become tedious.

Ordering info: marcusroberts.com

Lyrical and propulsive, **Dark Sand** (Travelers Road 195; 67:23) ★★★★★ by pianist Sergio Salvatore and vibraphonist Christos Rafalides is more than a little reminiscent of the 1970s duets of Chick Corea and Gary Burton, although Rafalides has a much drier tone than Burton. The comparison is most apt for their ability to fit parts together ingeniously and reinforce the soloist's lines. A broadly diverse program that includes a nimble take on Charles Mingus' "Nostalgia In Times Square" and some melodic originals, **Dark Sand** is highlighted by a churning interpretation of Luciano Salvatore's "Suite Together (Part II)." **DB**

Ordering info: travelersroadmusic.com



DAN TEPFER & LEE KONITZ DUOS WITH LEE

In Stores July 28, 2009
Sunnyside SSC 1219

The best way to hone a craft is through apprenticeship to a master. Occasionally, there is a give and take between the two involved that can foster mutual growth and exploration. Legendary saxophonist Lee Konitz has never shied from opportunities to play with far younger musicians to both challenge himself and to pass on knowledge garnered over his extraordinary career. On the new CD **Duos With Lee**, Konitz partners with an extremely talented musician 50 years his junior, pianist Dan Tepper, joining together to improvise and make a vibrant musical statement.

HERSCH



FRED HERSCH FRED HERSCH PLAYS JOBIM

In Stores July 28, 2009
Sunnyside SSC 1223

Brazil's affair with jazz delivered both a singular musical style with bossa nova and one of the greatest songwriters of all time, Antonio Carlos Jobim. Jobim's compositions are among the most well known and most frequently performed in the world. On **Fred Hersch Plays Jobim**, Hersch focuses his attention on Jobim's wonderful compositions, performing them on solo piano. Hersch's appreciation for Jobim's unique craftsmanship is obvious as he explores the possibilities presented by the beautiful themes and harmonies wrought into every piece.



www.sunnysiderecords.com

Lucky Thompson

New York City 1964-65

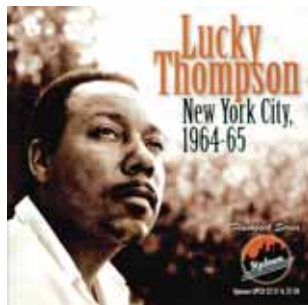
UPTOWN 27.57/27.58

★★★★

Uptown Records has struck aces on its recent Flashback Series, documenting consequential—even paradigm shifting—location captures. *Lucky Thompson: New York City, 1964-65*, Uptown's latest excavation, is a worthy addition to that catalog, and hardcore Thompson fans will consider it a valuable addition to the saxophonist's not-large-enough discography (much of which is out of print) for the musical content, the excellent sound and the comprehensive program notes, authored by Gigi Gryce biographer Noal Cohen and jazz journalist Dan Morgenstern.

In fact, Morgenstern co-produced the Thompson-led octet recital that makes up disk one, as one of six concerts in a winter 1964 series titled "Jazz On Broadway" at the Little Theater. As indicated in contemporaneous reviews by Whitney Balliett and John S. Wilson that are reprinted in the booklet, the perhaps under-rehearsed proceedings—it was the first of four sets over two nights—are a touch stiff and lugubrious, outlining the music's architecture without channeling its animating spirit.

A formidable stylist on tenor and soprano saxophones, Thompson never quite hits his stride, the rhythm section doesn't swing, and—despite the best efforts of Thompson's close friend Hank Jones—never finds the perfect tempo.



Drawn from a stereo radio broadcast 51 weeks later at Manhattan's Half Note, disk two documents Thompson operating at the highest level of chops and creativity with a swing-at-all-tempos rhythm section anchored by bassist George Tucker and propelled by drummer Oliver Jackson.

We hear Thompson's well-tuned, instantly recognizable soprano saxophone voice on his flagwaver "The World Awakes" and on a personalized "What's New." Thus inspired, he picks up the tenor for Tadd Dameron's "Lady Bird" and George Gershwin's "Strike Up The Band" and uncorks solos notable for tone, articulation, harmonic ingenuity, melodic development, relaxed, cat-like rhythmic phrasing, dynamic arc and overall cohesion. Offering informed comp and counterstating the flow is pianist Paul Neves, an individualistic New England pianist (he had played in a trio led by Boston drum legend Alan Dawson) whose career never made it past the well-kept-secret stage.

—Ted Panken

New York City, 1964-65: (Disc 1) Theme; The World Awakes; Minuet In Blues; 'Twas Yesterday; Firebug; Theme 2 (39:51). (Disc 2) Introduction; The World Awakes; What's New; Alan Grant Speaks; Lady Bird; Alan Grant; Strike Up The Band (44:38).

Personnel: (Disc 1) Lucky Thompson, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; Danny Tucker, alto saxophone; Cecil Payne, baritone saxophone; Dave Burns, trumpet; Benny Powell, trombone; Hank Jones, piano; Richard Davis, bass; Al Dreares, drums. (Disc 2) Thompson, soprano saxophone and tenor saxophone; Paul Neves, piano; George Tucker, bass; Oliver Jackson, drums; Alan Grant, spoken vocals.

» Ordering info: uptownrecords.net



Phil Woods

The Children's Suite

JAZZMEDIA 1040

★★★★

Many a jazz-loving parent has pondered how to introduce their children to a music that generally operates above the heads of most adults. Veteran alto saxophonist Phil Woods just made that dilemma easier. He's crafted a suite of jazz songs inspired by A.A. Milne's timeless children's stories. Woods wrote and arranged for a spare orchestra, rhythm and a string component. It swings and it floats admirably, conveying a variety of moods. Singers Vicki Doney and Bob Dorough were inspired choices: she's pliable and versatile, and he remains one of jazz's great eccentric vocalists. Peter Dennis provides Gielgudesque narration and verse.

While it's doubtful that most children have the stamina and focus for 77 minutes of music, Woods stacks the musical deck in his favor: Accessible melody is ever-present, the themes and motifs are varied, and solos seldom last beyond a chorus. Every kid has known Doney's longing on "Come Out With Me," and fuzz tone guitar on the atonal "Knight-in-Armour" will surely get their attention.

Woods' alto sings dimensionally throughout: sassy on "Pinkle," swinging with snap on "Morning Walk" and melancholic on "Come Out." He also displays fine writing, like the moody voicings of "Down By The Pond" and the Stravinsky-esque strings on "Buttercup Days."

Considering our toxic contemporary culture, kids could do much worse than get to know these songs. Their parents should like them, too.

—Kirk Silsbee

The Children's Suite: The Good Little Girl; Come Out With Me; Sneezies; Pinkle Purr; Down By The Pond; Waiting At The Window; Buttercup Days; The Friend & Us Two; Furry Bear; Knight-in-Armour; Wind On The Hill & The Engineer; Solitude; The Morning Walk; In The Dark & The End. (77:24)

Personnel: Phil Woods, alto saxophone; Vicki Doney, Bob Dorough, vocals; Peter Dennis, narrator; Ken Brader III, trumpet, flugelhorn; Bobby Rutch, French horn, flugelhorn; Rick Chamberlain, trombone; Nelson Hill, alto saxophone, flute; Tom Hamilton, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Roger Rosenberg, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Eric Doney, piano; Mark Williams, guitar; Steve Gilmore, bass; Bill Goodwin, drums; Paul Peabody, Joanna Farrer, violins; Juliet Haffner, viola; Mary Wooten, cello.

» Ordering info: jazzedmedia.com

Mike Stern Band

New Morning: The Paris Concert

HEADS UP DV 7166

★★★★

Mike Stern is a frenetic, whirling dervish of a guitarist whose contagious energy, intensity, wide grin and tremendous blowing skills sets his entire band afire. Recorded at Paris' popular New Morning club (5/16/2008), this concert DVD is the next best thing to seeing Stern at one of his legendary 55 Bar gigs in New York. Or it may be better.

Like all road dogs, Stern is energized by an attentive audience; the crowd at New Morning paying close attention to every string bend and drum note displacement. They're rewarded with Stern's typically insane guitar work in songs like the 16th-note-ripping burners "Chromazone" and "KT," as well as the more lyrical, near ballad affairs, "Wing And A Prayer" and



"Wishing Well."

Always the master of the slow burn, Stern pushes his battered Tele nearly past the point of possibility, ratcheting up the heat by degrees just when you assume that's all there is. Sure, there's a bit of funk/fusion-by-numbers happening—these guys have been doing it so long they could drill this stuff in their sleep—but when the sparks ignite as in "Chromazone" and "Tumble Home," this band is a bruiser, leaving nothing but blisters and a sweaty stage in their wake. With the tried-and-tested rhythm team of Dave Weckl and Tom Kennedy, this is easily Mike Stern's best band ever, as he blows mad from Hall to Hendrix with nothing but grins in between.

—Ken Micallef

New Morning: The Paris Concert: Tumble Home; KT; Wishing Well; What Might Have Been; Chatter; That's All It Is; Wing And A Prayer; Chromazone. (112:00)

Personnel: Mike Stern, guitar; Tom Kennedy, bass; Bob Franceschini, tenor sax; Dave Weckl, drums.

» Ordering info: heads-up.com

Inheritors and Veterans

Big James & the Chicago Playboys: *Right Here Right Now* (Blind Pig 5232; 47:08) ★★★½ On his Blind Pig debut, singer James Montgomery proves he has emotional strength worthy of a major-league soul bluesman, not to mention a knack for playing jazz trombone. He keeps his humanistic concerns paramount in his lyrics, and his songs are an unpredictable collision of funky blues and horn-driven r&b. "Love To See You Smile" boasts a bass line out of Booker T & The MGs' Memphis soul. The love confessional "Help" looks to the Isley Brothers, with guitarist Mike Wheeler in Ernie Isley's shoes.

Ordering info: blindpigrecords.com

Keith Crossan: *Beatnik Jungle* (KM Music 001; 33:26) ★★★½ It took a good while—30-plus years and thousands of shows with bosses like John Lee Hooker, and Tommy Castro—but Crossan has finally turned in his first solo album. It's a winner. Not using singers, the Bay Area saxophonist takes stock of jump-blues ("Turk's Groove"), greased-up funk ("Out The Gate," with Austin de Lone on Hammond), Jr. Walker-style r&b ("Clemency"), and crime jazz-blues with dabs of Thelonious Monk-ish piano ("Paris") or heavy streaks of big-band color ("Beatnik Jungle").

Ordering info: keithcrossan.com

Judy Roderick & The Forbears: *When I'm Gone* (Dexofon 0813; 47:37) ★★★★★ One of the few outstanding white blues singers, Roderick died way too early at 49 in 1992. She and her Big Sky overalls-and-boots band get it just right playing straight blues, r&b, folk-country, hokum and swing-era jazz, and Chuck Berry rock on a stirring Americana album first released in 1983. Dr. John and a horn section show up to add punch or sway to four of a dozen tracks. Oh, Lord, she's missed.

Ordering info: dexofon.com

Felix Cabrera Band with Jimmy Vivino: *Live At The Turning Point* (Suitcase Sound 001; 66:26) ★★★★★ This New York club performance starring Cabrera and "Conan O'Brien" guitarist Vivino finds volumes of blues tension built and released with uncommon assurance. Cabrera, of Cuban heritage, owns a distinctive singing voice, and his harp playing has a depth of character forged out of influences Little Walter



Big James: major leaguer

CHRISTOPHER JACOBS

and James Cotton. In this music, lyricism, excitement, jazzy freedom and a feeling of intimate spaciousness are never far apart. Cabrera's melodic tunes are as fine as the freshened-up blues classics and the unlikely merger of "Manteca" and Bob Dylan's "Maggie's Farm."

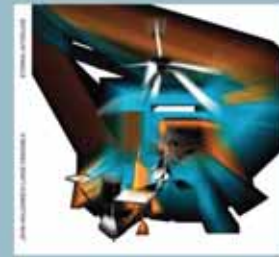
Ordering info: felixcabrera.com

Rick Estrin & The Nightcats: *Twisted* (Alligator 4930; 52:01) ★★★½ Estrin's singing—pinched in tone, smart-alecky—doesn't agree with everyone, but given a fair shake its peculiar charisma can win you over. His harmonica is beyond reproach, gouging the air with its heartfelt lines and sure rhythms. With guitarist Charlie Baty out of the band, ace replacement Kid Anderson expresses active ideas with plenty of verve. The crackerjack rhythm section, too, draws wry humor and honest revelry out of new material, including instrumentals. Back-to-back home runs: the casually intense kiss-off "You Can't Come Back" and the dead-serious slow wail "Someone, Somewhere."

Ordering info: alligator.com

Jenni Muldaur: *Dearest Darlin'* (Dandelion Music; 36:07) ★★★½ Inheriting her semi-famous father's musical intelligence and her famous mother's lung power, Jenni is a non-conformist who is delighted to bring the immediacy of discovery to blues and r&b obscurities she's taken on loan from blues dynamo Big Mama Thornton, New Orleans' Lee Dorsey, balladeer James Brown, Bo Diddley, NRBQ and more. Sean Costello, now gone, plays good guitar. **DB**

Ordering info: dandelionmusic.us



JOHN HOLLENBECK LARGE ENSEMBLE

ETERNAL INTERLUDE

In Stores August 18, 2009
Sunnyside SSC 1220

The instrumentation reminds one of the jazz big bands of old, which have long since disappeared, but this group lives in a world without classification. In effort to be fair to the eclecticism of the composer and group, Sunnyside avoids the labeling game and is proud to present the new recording from the John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble, *ETERNAL INTERLUDE*. The composer/percussionist is comfortable using musical elements from a vast array of genres, including modern classical, jazz, and progressive rock.



ROGER ROSENBERG
BARITONALITY

In Stores August 18, 2009
Sunnyside SSC 1221

There have been a number of great baritone saxophonists in jazz that have been able to bring their instrument to the forefront: Gerry Mulligan, Serge Chaloff and Pepper Adams to name a few. On his new recording *BARITONALITY*, Roger Rosenberg joins this illustrious list of bari players to record as a leader. As a highly sought sideman, Rosenberg has been a member of groups led by many of jazz's most illustrious musicians, including Miles Davis, Tito Puente, and Chet Baker.



www.sunnysiderecords.com

JOHN HOLLENBECK

ROGER ROSENBERG

Roswell Rudd

Trombone Tribe

SUNNYSIDE 1207

★★★★½

The term “masterpiece” has its limits in discussing jazz, particularly when the music in question embodies the most ephemeral aspects of jazz—the spark, the flame and the smoke that Roswell Rudd emphasizes. Perhaps that’s why jazz masterpieces are ultimately codified through scores and transcriptions, and rhythm is rendered as part of a warhorse’s anatomy. Rudd instead uses rhythm to protean ends, creating multiple feels in a performance; for almost a half century, the trombonist has extended Herbie Nichols’ melding of march, Dixieland and rumba feels on tunes like “Twelve Bars.” Rudd and Sexmob nail the veering saunter and balletic wobble on the winning version included on *Trombone Tribe*. It’s masterful, as is the bulk of this album.

The other four ensembles featured on the album demonstrate an ease with Rudd’s themes and grooves, but only the New Orleans-based Bonerama matches Sexmob for greasy cooking. However, a lot more is required of the others, and it is how they handle their respective, varied compositions that make the album’s case for unity through diversity so solid. While they swing persuasively, particularly on the Latin movement of the five-part “A Place Above,” the Gangbe Brass Band of Benin are most impressive when they apply a ceremonial propriety and polish to the album-bracketing fanfares.



Similarly, the all-star, six-bone septet featuring the indefatigable Eddie Bert simply steamrolls through “Astro Slyde,” yet they trump themselves with the way they gradually squeeze exuberance from the lugubrious opening plaint on “Hulla Gulla.”

Rudd’s Trombone Tribe sextet brings a deceptively loose feel to a wide berth of materials.

“Elton Dean” would lope unabashedly were it not for the occasional sharp-edged line that requires subtle shifts in tone and attack. The calypso bounce of “To The Day” and the cruising-speed roll of “Sand In My Slide Shuffle” have an incessant undertow. This is partly attributable to the pull between Henry Grimes and Bob Stewart, which is most prominent on “No End,” where Grimes’ false start-flecked opening solo implies a different feel than that laid down by Stewart. Likewise, the outbound energies of Rudd, Deborah Weisz and Steve Swell are circumscribed by Barry Altschul’s impeccable drumming.

—Bill Shoemaker

Trombone Tribe: Fan Fare; Elton Dean; Astro Slyde; Hulla Gulla; No End; Bone Again With Bonerama; To The Day; Sand In My Slide Shuffle; Slide & The Family Bone; Twelve Bars With Sexmob; A Place Above (suite). (58:20)

Select Personnel: Roswell Rudd, Deborah Weisz, Sam Burtis, Steve Swell, Ray Anderson, Eddie Bert, Wycliffe Gordon, Josh Roseman, trombone; Henry Grimes, bass, violin; Bob Stewart, tuba; Barry Altschul, drums; Steve Bernstein, slide trumpet (10); Briggan Krauss, alto saxophone (10); Doug Wieselman, clarinet (10); Marcus Rojas, tuba (10); Tony Sherr, bass (10); Kenny Wollesen, drums (10); Gangbe Brass Band of Benin (1, 11–15); Bonerama (6).

» Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Justin Adams & Juldeh Camara

Tell No Lies

REAL WORLD 884108

★★★★

British rock guitarist Justin Adams has displayed a steady interest in West African sounds



over the last decades, both through his work with former Led Zeppelin singer Robert Plant and in producing the debut album by Tuareg rockers Tinariwen. He’s entered the fray more directly in this project with Malian Juldeh Camara, a singer and a dynamo on the ancient one-stringed fiddle known as the riti. The project’s second album, *Tell No Lies*, explores the oft-discussed connections between American blues and the hypnotic, circular Malian music made famous by guitarist Ali Farka Toure.

While a few tunes push the links a bit too literally—“Kele Kele (No Passport No Visa)” adopts a Bo Diddley beat and “Fulani Coochie Man” strains in its homage to Muddy Waters—the overwhelming majority of the album nails

the commonalities to create an exciting, unfussy hybrid. Adams is impressive at adapting his raunchy rock guitar to the modal demands of the African foundation here, sticking with the instrument’s low-end range even when uncorking some of his most ferocious solos. Amazingly, his electric riffs sound utterly natural

beside the keening, rustic riti lines scraped out Camara, who’s a phenomenally soulful and expressive singer. The pair, which gets little instrumental help outside the dynamic hand percussion of Salah Dawson Miller, make the cross-cultural blend work because they clearly understand both sides of the equation.

—Peter Margasak

Tell No Lies: Sahara; Tonio Yima; Kele Kele (No Passport No Visa); Fulani Coochie Man; Achu; Madam Mariama; Gainako; Nangu Sobeh; Banjul Girl; Chukaloy Dayoy; Futa Jalo. (53:54)

Personnel: Justin Adams, electric, acoustic guitars, vocals, percussion, piano, bass; Juldeh Camara, vocals, riti, kologo; Salah Dawson Miller, percussion (1); Mim Suleiman, backing vocals (1); Billy Fuller, electric and upright bass (2, 3, 5, 6); Simon Edwards, baby bass (9).

» Ordering info: realworldrecords.com



Lucky 7s

Pluto Junkyard

CLEAN FEED 141

★★★★½

If there was any silver lining to be found in the dark clouds that gathered over New Orleans in August of 2005, it would have to be the way in which the musical seeds scattered by Katrina’s winds have begun to sprout in their new soils. Witness the *Lucky 7s*, a cross-pollination of the Nawlins and Chicago scenes that has resulted in an often stirring hybrid of the two cities’ sounds. Co-led by trombonists Jeb Bishop and Jeff Albert (the one Orleanian who has returned to his beleaguered hometown), the *7s* couple the brawny angularity of the Windy City with the flavorings of brass band funk.

The Chicago coterie—Bishop, cornetist Josh Berman, tenorist Keefe Jackson and vibist Jason Adasiewicz—are well-known, both to each other and to followers of that scene. But the injection of Albert, bassist Matthew Golombisky and drummer Quin Kirchner forces them into some unexpected terrain. Chief among them is the closing tune, “Sunny’s Bounce,” a relatively straightforward swinger that Albert wrote under the influence of one of Sun Ra’s old Delmark releases.

The surrealist-noir feel is skewed by the spikiness of the ensemble’s approach, Adasiewicz’s vibes adding the proper dose of Arkestral atmosphere. His solo on “Ash” reaches dreamily upward before Albert and Bishop cross swords in a raucous ’bones duel.

The inspiration of both instrumentation and context allow for a range of textures, from the Katrina-inspired stained-glass meditation of Bishop’s “Afterwards” to the raucous urgency of “The Dan Hang,” to which the Chicago co-leader overdubbed a squalling electric guitar, pouring fuel onto an already raging fire.

—Shaun Brady

Pluto Junkyard: #6; Pluto Junkyard; Ash; Cultural Baggage; Future Dog (For Jaki); Jaki’s Walk; Afterwards; The Dan Hang; Sunny’s Bounce. (70:09)

Personnel: Jeb Bishop, trombone, guitar (8); Jeff Albert, trombone, bass trombone; Josh Berman, cornet; Keefe Jackson, tenor saxophone; Jason Adasiewicz, vibes; Matthew Golombisky, acoustic bass, electric bass (8); Quin Kirchner, drums.

» Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

Brazilian Reinventions

Early in Rio De Janeiro singer Clara Moreno's career, she seemed to be trying to distance herself from her famous mother, Joyce, using electronica to differentiate her music from bossa-jazz. But in the last few years she's been reaching out to more traditional sounds and her terrific new album *Miss Balanço* (Far Out 141; 51:40) ★★★★★, produced by her mom, finds her settling in nicely. She tackles lesser-known '60s samba classics associated with musicians like Wilson Simonal and Jorge Ben, and her young band's bright, buoyant arrangements remake the tunes in her own image. Samba vets João Donato and Orlandivo lend a hand, but Moreno has never sounded so confident and rhythmically astute.

Ordering info: faroutrecordings.com

With his debut album, *Says Don Day Don Dree Don Don* (Luaka Bop 80899 0071; 38:17) ★★★★★ singer Márcio Local also looks to the past for inspiration, specifically the samba soul pioneered by Jorge Ben. On the killer opening track "Samba Sem Nenhum Problema" he employs a dangerously effective falsetto, elongating words just like Ben in his prime. The album, produced by Mario Caldato Jr., doesn't ignore the present, folding in some hip-hop elements and electronic flourishes, but despite its deep investment in '70s sounds, Local's singing and his tunes are so strong and infectious that it's impossible to sweat that he wears his influences on his sleeve.

Ordering info: luakabop.com

Moacyr Luz, known primarily as a composer whose tunes have been tackled by Maria Bethania, Nana Caymmi and Emilio Santiago, has always been a staunch sambista, and with his latest album, *Batucando* (Biscoito Fino 867; 42:47) ★★★½, he doesn't tinker with tradition. The spry arrangements rely on acoustic guitars, cavaquinho and hand percussion. While Luz is only an average singer, his tunes sound like classics. He wisely enlists some classy friends to join him on vocals—including Martinho Da Vila, Ivan Lins, Alcione and Luiz Melodia—for this charmingly low-key, relaxed set.

Ordering info: biscoitofino.com.br

While singer Mariana Aydar has absorbed plenty of Brazilian traditions, her fine new album *Peixes Passaros Pessoas* (Universal, Brazil 60251795043; 53:59) ★★★★★ is thoroughly contemporary, a new



Clara Moreno: buoyant discoveries

FAROUT RECORDINGS

stripe in the country's MPB umbrella. The recording was co-produced by Kassin (of +2 fame), and he brings a rich and varied panoply of instrument choices and styles to the fold. The sensual "Beleza" has a smoldering soul undertone, while "Ta?" gives a sharp electro-gloss to the sound forró music. Aydar possesses a warm, thick voice that navigates the diverse rhythmic schemes with nonchalant agility.

Ordering info: universalmusic.com.br

Duo Moviola is Douglas Germano and Kiko DiNuccio, promising samba revisionists, both from São Paulo. On their charming debut *O Retrato Do Artists Quando Pede* (Desmonta 04: 34:36) ★★★★★ they create lean, propulsive art-pop tunes built from samba grooves using fiercely rhythmic acoustic guitar, spare piano, hand percussion and their insinuating voices, often in harmony. The pair's intimacy and rapport fills in the space. By getting the most out of their complex arrangements the songs burrow deep into the memory.

Ordering info: desmonta.com

London's DJ Cliffy is a rabid collector of Brazilian music and he shares some of his treasures on *Black Rio 2: Original Samba Soul 1971-1980* (Strut 045; 55:46) ★★★★★½, a knock-out collection of underservedly obscure jams loosely connected with Black Rio (a Brazilian black consciousness movement) in the '70s. Some tracks bluntly reveal strong American funk, disco and soul influences, yet even the baldest appropriations are solid and still impart at least some sliver of native culture. The best material finds artists like Emilio Santiago or Edson Frederico e A Transa building on local traditions with ingenious international borrowings. DB

Ordering info: strut-records.com



HEMISPHERES CROSSROADS

In Stores July 28, 2009
Sunnyside SSC 1235

Jazz musicians seem to be increasingly flexible stylistically and inspired by music from all over the globe. This fusion of musical influences has created performers who enjoy advanced technical facility and have open ears, furthering the progression of modern music. Percussionist Ian Dogole is one such musician and his new recording *Crossroads* displays his overarching vision of music as a conglomeration of the many sounds from around the world. Dogole has been dedicated to the research and performance of music from indigenous cultures and applying this to jazz performance.



CARLOS FRANZETTI MAMBO TANGO

In Stores August 11, 2009
Sunnyside SSC 1230

When a composer/pianist of Carlos Franzetti's caliber makes a solo piano record, it can be so much more. *Mambo Tango* provides an opportunity for this Grammy Award winning composer to not only showcase his talent as a keyboard player but also gives an exposed look at his compositional and arranging style on some classic fare, along with three Franzetti originals.



www.sunnysiderecords.com

HEMISPHERES

FRANZETTI

Nicholas Urie Large Ensemble

*Excerpts From An
Online Dating
Service*

RED PIANO RECORDS 4402

★★½

If Kurt Weill had lived into the Internet age, he may well have conjured something like composer Nicholas Urie's *Excerpts From An Online Dating Service*. As anyone who has surfed through the personals sites knows, the profiles are full of Threepenny Operatic characters searching to fulfill their fantasies. Urie excerpts some of the more eccentric and, in many cases, explicit examples he's found and assembled them into a raunchy jazz burlesque.

On his web site, Urie features a quote from composer Claude Debussy: "I love music passionately. And because I love it I try to free it from the barren traditions that stifle it." The 23-year-old Urie eagerly adopts that stance but interprets it as a mandate to layer on the shock value, and his compositions are too often cabaret pastiche settings for the X-rated texts. That's unfortunate, as when he doesn't seem to be stifling a guffaw at his own naughty cleverness, Urie reveals a flair for offbeat dramatics, most of



all on the two brief "Interludes" and in the dancing tendrils of "Cougar Seeks Prey," one of two tracks that feature Chris Speed's sinuous clarinet.

Urie has assembled a gifted 16-piece ensemble to interpret his music, especially when he frees them from between heavy-handed quotation marks, as on the sinister "Holidaze," a dark, creeping dirge. But his canniest bit of casting was in handing the vocal chores to Christine Correa, who approaches the kinky and borderline-illiterate ramblings as accidental poetry, carving characters out of these miniature autobiographies with a husky, Dietrich-inflected keen that intermingles the boldness of the texts ("I'm just here for sex/And yes I have a picture you might like/In it I'm banging my ex-wife") and the vulnerability implied in their desires.

—Shaun Brady

Excerpts From An Online Dating Service: Overture; About Me; Holidaze; Bad Girl?; Interlude #1; Wayne; Interlude #2; Cougar Seeks Prey; Afternoon. (52:07)

Personnel: Nicholas Urie, composer, conductor; Christine Correa, voice; Jeremy Udden, Aaron Kruziki, Bill McHenry, Kenny Pexton, Brian Landrus, saxophones/woodwinds; Bijon Watson, Jeff Clausen, Dave Smith, John Carlson, trumpets; Lolly Bienenfeld, Randy Pingrey, Matt Plummer, trombones; Michael Christianson, tuba; Frank Carlberg, piano; Joe Martin, bass; Michael Calabrese, drums; Chris Speed, clarinet (8, 9).

» Ordering info: redpianorecords.com

Kermit Ruffins

Livin' A Treme Life

BASIN STREET RECORDS 107

★★★★½

Whether he's reimagining a Horace Silver standard or revamping a trad jazz beat, Kermit Ruffins is an expert at what he does, and with lyrics like "I can't wait to get your ass home," he's not exactly promising "Giant Steps."

Instead, on the his 10th album as a leader, Ruffins continues to play unofficial mayor, boasting about "Treme Mardi Gras." His all-star band includes David Torkanowsky, Herlin Riley, Troy Andrews and George Porter Jr. While Tork holds down every track on the album masterfully, Ruffins rotates other personnel, allowing him to handle the Isley Brothers almost as well as he swings on a traditional tune like "High Heel Sneakers." The Piety Street Studio team's engineering efforts lend a seamless finish.

Livin' A Treme Life opens with a true-to-form cover of Pops' "Didn't He Ramble," an easy-going romp that features Andrews on trombone and Preservation Hall Jazz Band's Carl LeBlanc on banjo. This is the stuff Ruffins' solo career has been made of since he left Rebirth Brass Band, but the addition of LeBlanc's banjo



makes the whole package shine. In a nod to Jessie Hill on "I Got Mine," he enlists Porter and June Yamagishi on guitar. While Ruffins holds down the throwback style of mid-'60s New Orleans r&b, Porter and Yamagishi fuse that swing with funk and rock influences that make the track.

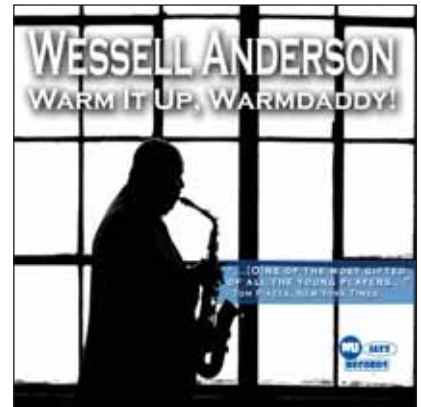
The four original tracks here also deserve merit, especially "Hey Naa," which features a country beat and almost zydeco-influenced phrasing. Wrapping up the album with a neighborhood shout-out, Ruffins reunites former bandmates Philip and Keith Frazier, whose comfort with a more pop-heavy sound help the group pull off an extended rap. A hint of cheese rears its head on "I Can See Clearly Now," but as with the rest of the material, Ruffins has so much fun with the music that it works.

—Jennifer Odell

Livin' A Treme Life: Didn't He Ramble; I Ate Up The Apple Tree; Good Morning New Orleans; Holy Cow; Hey Naa; I Got Mine; I Can See Clearly Now; High Heel Sneakers; Hello Good Evening; Song For My Father; For the Love of You; Treme Mardi Gras. (48:96)

Personnel: Kermit Ruffins, trumpet, vocals; David Torkanowsky, piano; Eric Traub, tenor sax; June Yamagishi, guitar; Carl LeBlanc, banjo; Dewon Scott, Herlin Riley, drums; Troy Andrews, trumpet, trombone; Corey Henry, trombone; Kevin Morris, George Porter Jr., bass; Mark Mullins, Craig Klein, Greg Hicks, additional horns; Tonia Powell, Lisa Phillips, Patrice Hardin, Vernon Eard, Betty Winn, additional vocals; Baby Jaye, rap.

» Ordering info: basinstreetrecords.com



Wessell Anderson

Warm It Up, Warmdaddy

NU JAZZ RECORDS 1025

★★★★½

The adage "don't judge a book by its cover" might well have been coined for *Warm It Up, Warmdaddy*, alto saxophonist Wessell Anderson's fifth leader date and his first since he suffered a stroke in July 2007. As the publicity materials trumpet the virtues and accomplishments of the label head but have little to say about the contents of the date, much less the performers, Anderson's reasons for presenting a suite of reharmed/remelodized versions of cutely retitled iconic songbook standards ("What Is This Thing Called Love"/"What Is Dat Thang"; "All The Things You Are"/"All The Thangs You Ain't"; "Four"/"Fore"; "Lover"/"Strickly Platonic") remain opaque. What is transparent throughout, however, is Anderson's exemplary musicianship and flat-out instrumental command, which transport the actual notes and tones to a place far beyond the Music Minus One trappings.

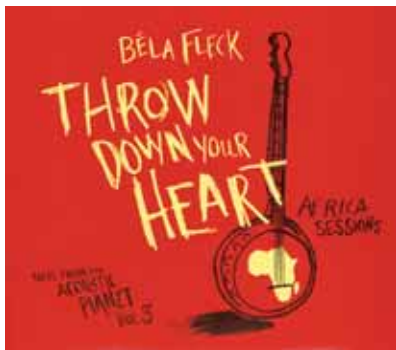
Propelled by a competent, swinging rhythm section, the one-time lead altoist of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra uncorks a series of erudite, cut-to-the-chase improvisations in which he navigates the substitute changes with sure-footed grace and a relaxed, ebulliently swinging time feel reminiscent of Sonny Stitt, one of Anderson's early heroes. Anderson knows how to extract maximum juice from his melodies, and he has a knack for interpolating hip, apposite quotes within the flow of his declamations. His intonation is impeccable in all the registers, but his sound also contains ineffable qualities—a keening "African Cowboy" cry, an abiding warmth that illuminates the source of the cognomen referred to in the album title. A master class.

—Ted Panken

Warm It Up, Warmdaddy: What Is Dat Thang?; I'll Forget May; Warm It Up, Warmdaddy; Balto, Will You Please Come Home?; Monk By Starlight; Warmfreeze; Fore; All The Thangs You Ain't; Space "Nakamura San"; Balto, Will You Please Come Home? (alt. take-fast); Strickly Platonic; I'll Forget May (alt. take-fast); Bluesette. (62:32)

Personnel: Wessell Anderson, alto saxophone; Lawrence Sieberth, piano; Roland Guerin, bass; Mark Gully, drums.

» Ordering info: nujazzentertainment.com



Bela Fleck

Throw Down Your Heart

ROUNDER 0634

★★★★

For the third installment of his “Tales From The Acoustic Planet” series, Bela Fleck heads to Africa, falling in step with crisscrossing rhythmic patterns as he crisscrosses the continent.

Some songs have jazz foundations (“D’Gary’s “Jam” featuring Richard Bona and Baba Maal), resemble bluegrass (“Kinetsa,” Madagascar), feature fast, countrified beats not unlike Western folk forms (“Angelina,” Uganda), or speak to the banjo’s origins (“Ajula/Mbamba,” from Gambia, featuring a banjo-like, but much older instrument called the akonting). Others trace a lineage to the blues, both in tone and structure.

The Malian Wassoulou singer Oumou Sangare and kora player Toumani Diabate contribute exemplary offerings of West African pop, while former freedom fighter Vusi Mahlasela’s plaintive voice cooes the almost lullaby-like traditional “Thula Mama.” A fuzzy, low-voiced bowed lyre and toe percussion on the Tanzanian track “Pakugyenda Bale-bauo” would be right at home in Morphine’s lineup.

To an unaccustomed ear without a sense of adventure, some of the rhythms and melodies can be unsettling. But get through the cartoonish vocal part on “Kabibi,” or the screams that punctuate “Zawosi,” and the payoff involves quick-stepping cousins of the scat, gorgeous melodies and new sounds.

—Jennifer Odell

Throw Down Your Heart: Tulinesangala; Kinetsa; Ah Ndiya; Kabibi; Angelina; D’Gary Jam; Throw Down Your Heart; Thula Mama; Wairenziantie; Buribala; Zawose; Ajula/Mbamba; Pakugyenda Balebauo; Jesus Is The Only Answer; Matitu; Mariam; Djorolen; Dunia Haina Wema/Thumb Fun. (73:00).

Select Personnel: Bela Fleck, banjo; Nakisenyi Women’s Group, vocals; D’Gary, guitar; Xavier-Martial Francois, percussion, vocals; Casey Driessen, fiddle; Oumou Sangare, vocals; Anania Nogoglia, vocals, thumb piano; Luo Cultural Association; Richard Bona, electric bass, vocals; Baba Maal, vocals; Vusi Mahlasela, guitar, vocals; Afel Bocum, vocals, guitar; Hama Sankaré, calabash, vocals; Yoro Cissé, njurkle; Barou Diallo, bass; Zoumana Tereta, sokou; Toumani Diabate; Haruna Sameke Trio; Bassekou Kouyate; Muwewesu Xylophone Group; Chibite—The Zawose Family; The Jatta Family; Warema Masiaga Cha Cha, vocals, bowed lyre, toe percussion; Djelimady Tounkaraga, guitar; Alou Coulibazi, clabash; Ateso Jazz Band, thumb pianos; Khalifan Matitu, marimba; Fadhili Bbata, percussion.

» Ordering info: rounder.com

Shooting Stars

For anyone wanting to get a taste of latter-day Miles Davis in concert, *That’s What Happened: Live In Germany 1987* (Eagle Eye Media 39180-9; 98:00) ★★★½ is a good place to start. Granted, one will miss some of the names that Davis introduced in the 1980s, like guitarist John Scofield, but the crew he had at the time of this concert still featured some bright stars, including saxist Kenny Garrett, electric bassist Darryl Jones, drummer Ricky Wellman and guitarist Joseph “Foley” McCreary. The set list was a typical one of the time, featuring extended versions of “Time After Time,” “Human Nature” and “Tutu.” Davis’ chops are somewhat subdued (his muted trumpet is consistently under-miked), and the camera work is on-again/off-again, with good closeups balanced by stage shots. The show closes with the haunting, memorable “Portia.” Bonus features include an interview and a segment called “Miles And His Art.”

Ordering info: eaglerockent.com

Anita O’Day: The Life Of A Jazz Singer (AOD Productions 101819; 91:00) ★★★★★ captures the essence and spirit of this celebrated artist in a way few bios can. Whether it’s clips and photos from all aspects of her life and work, extensive interview material with not only O’Day but significant others both past and present, or just letting the woman sing, this production keeps the viewer engaged with its honest portrayal of someone who won and lost in life. Like Billie Holiday, O’Day’s affinity with the musicians she played with comes across vividly with spots like her turns on “Body And Soul” and “Tea For Two” from TV segments. Featuring talking heads George Wein, Johnny Mandel, Phil Schaap, Annie Ross, Will Friedwald, along with former bandmates, this lively production plays fast and loose with graphics that are totally in-synch with the subject matter; indeed, O’Day pops right off the screen into your living room. Bonuses include complete, riveting performances of, among other songs, “Sweet Gerogia Brown” (from Newport 1958), “Honescukle Rose” and “Love for Sale,” extra interview material and a 32-page booklet with liner note essays by Friedwald and James Gavin.

Ordering info: anitaodaydoc.com



Anita O’Day: musicians’ singer

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

By way of contrast, **Billie Holiday: The Life And Artistry Of Lady Day** (idem 1115; 27:50) ★★ gives a very brief overview of Holiday’s life and art. The strong points are the many clips of her in performance and in movies, most often uninterrupted. But the information presented doesn’t really offer anything new, and if offered in a predictable style. Featuring her 1957 studio performance with such heavies as Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster and Roy Eldridge, other spots include Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

Ordering info: thebebopshop.com

Sonny Stitt–J.J. Johnson Sextet: We Remember Bird Berlin & London 1964 (Impro-Jazz 541; 60:00) ★★ highlights these two greats in two black & white television broadcasts. The creative set design of the Berlin show gives the viewer the feel and look of art in the making, with American jazz musicians playing not just to entertain but to elevate. The theme of Bird animates the first show from Berlin, originally titled “In Memoriam Charlie Parker,” while the second set from London echoes the same bebop flavors with a more traditional concert hall setting. Of the seven songs included, five are Parker originals “Now’s The Time,” “Buzzy” and “My Little Suede Shoes,” while the lone standard is one that’s been associated with Parker, the twice-played ballad “Lover Man.” And what gives these performances their heft is the backup band, threatening to upstage the alto sax and trombone greats: former Birdmates Howard McGhee on trumpet, pianist Walter Bishop Jr., bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Kenny Clarke.

Ordering info: thebebopshop.com

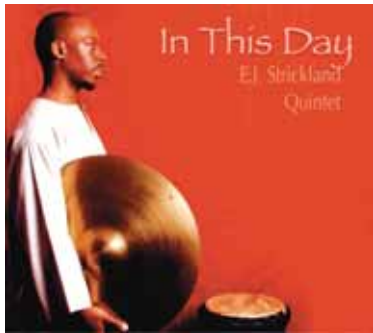
DB

E.J. Strickland

In This Day
STRICK MUZIK 003
★★★★

An exceptional debut recording from drummer E.J. Strickland, *In This Day* showcases a resourceful, inventive and extremely cohesive young quintet. The CD features saxophonists Marcus Strickland and Jaleel Shaw, who, performing like two heads of the same overachieving organism, help drive E.J.'s dark-hearted material with serpentine solos and brooding power.

A rising sideman who's worked with Russell Malone, Freddie Hubbard and The New Jazz Composer's Octet, among others, Strickland's compositional skills are as impressive as his percolating drumming, which almost takes a secondary role. When his drumming is highlighted, as in the sparse solos of "New Beginnings" and "Angular Realms," Strickland speaks with his own voice, conjured in the image of Tony Williams, Airtio Moriera, Alphonse Mouzon and Horatio "El Negro" Hernandez. Not purely a straight-ahead drummer, Strickland distills a variety of styles to propel equally diverse composi-



tional influences.

The Latin-esque fusion of "Angular Realms" is explosively improvisational, with blistering solos from Marcus Strickland and Wurlitzer whiz Luis Perdomo. "New Beginnings" uses a throbbing, conga-driven mambo groove over which the saxophonists play a circular, tightly defined melody that

resembles cars flowing in and out of rush hour traffic. Far from a simple collection of tracks, *In This Day* is a unified and thoughtful work, the songs' elegant trajectory creating a logical thematic progression, from heated straight-ahead opener "Abandoned Discovery" through simmering Latin and ballad moments to several spoken-word pieces that add a poetic touch.

—Ken Micallef

In This Day: Abandoned Discovery; Asante; Eternal; Pedrito's Prelude; New Beginnings; In Faith (In This Day); In This Day; Angular Realms; Find Myself; W/rong Turn; Illusions; Robin; Robin Fly Away. (73:01)

Personnel: Enoch Jamal Strickland, drums; Jaleel Shaw, alto sax; Marcus Strickland, tenor, soprano saxes; Luis Perdomo, piano; Wurlitzer; Hans Glawischnig, bass; Cheray O'Neal, Charenee Wade, spoken word/vocals.

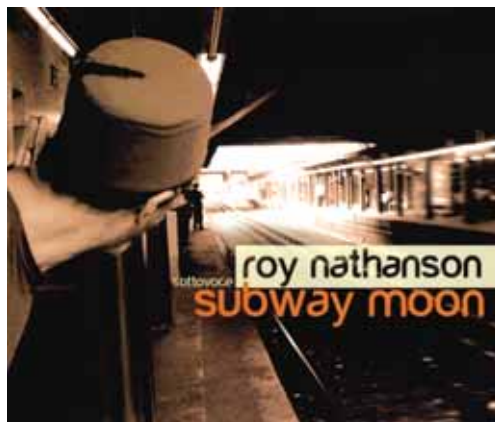
» Ordering info: strickmuzik.com

Roy Nathanson

Subway Moon
YELLOWBIRD 7711
★★★★½

The second album by saxophonist Roy Nathanson's Sotto Voce project, which marries spoken word with jazz, succeeds for a number of reasons, but focus is key among them. The music on the album was commissioned by Chamber Music America's New Works, and the long-time Jazz Passenger weaves together a number of cogent stories and images gleaned from the New York subway system, particularly Brooklyn, his native neighborhood, to create an evocative beyond-the-surface portrait of the city. The fluid, street smart poems that occupy most of the pieces were taken from a book of the same name that Nathanson recently published, and he complements his own dry but musical delivery with the beatboxing of Napoleon Maddox and interjections and harmony parts from various other band members.

There are other Jazz Passengers involved, including trombonist Curtis Fowlkes, violinist Sam Bardfield and vibist Bill Ware; they execute the resourceful, shape-shifting arrangements, which, along with urban environmental sound samples, provide a rich canvas for Nathanson's words. He avoids the typical, overly dramatic spoken word approach, and in



some ways his voice becomes yet another element in the buoyant, multi-linear attack. Although there's nothing remotely retro about the music, some of his aching melodies and ebullient counterpoint recalls another jazz great who liked to work with spoken word: Charles Mingus. An impressive piece of work.

—Peter Margasak

Subway Moon: Love Train; Subway Noah; Party; Alto Rain; Dear Brother; Orange Alert; Two Horn Rain; New Guy To Look At; Stand Clear; Safer End Of Subway Moon. (55:00)

Personnel: Roy Nathanson, alto, soprano saxophone, voice; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone, vocals; Brad Jones, bass; Tim Kiah, vocals, bass (1); Sam Bardfield, violin; Napoleon Maddox, beatbox, vocals; Bill Ware, vibes, vocals, organ; Hugo Dwyer, keyboard sampler; Sean Sonderegger, tenor sax, flute; Marcus Rojas, tuba; Gabriel Nathanson, trumpet (1).

» Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Joel Harrison

Urban Myths
HIGH NOTE 7194
★★★★

High Note releases generally prove reliably mainstream; this one has more bite. The placid cover pic of the Hudson and predictable title don't prepare for the energy released by this crack nonet.

The opener starts blithely, as do several of the heads, then Daniel Kelly's organ sound infiltrates the bottom end. Before you know it, Christian Howes' bravura violin is scything in, followed by David Binney's first of several fabulous solos, goaded by choppy rock drumming from Jordan Person.

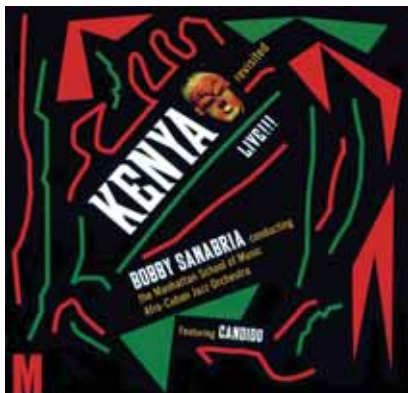
The theme of "125 And Lenox" is a tad bland, but like several tracks, acts as bait for building the groove. Harrison officially "shreds" with a tournament guitar solo. "Mood Rodeo," in surreptitious 5/4, might be a closer manifesto title than "Urban Myths." Harrison, reverberated, mimics Howes' violin, steeped in blues. A dropout heralds Binney, who blows smoke rings over skipping drums until that devilish organ whirl gets under again, then his alto darts off on a liquid foray.

Obviously, "Last Waltz For Queva" is about someone, namely Queva Lutz, who ran the 55 Bar in New York's West Village and gave Harrison shelter so he could create his storm. James Brown, or perhaps snatches of the Buddy Rich band, meets Thelonious Monk on Harrison's penetrating recast of "Chaser," where Akinmusire gets a taste before a now Greg Osby-like Binney. Contrapuntal elements intelligently utilizing the ensemble create a beautiful moiré at the end of "Between." The title cut employs second line beats, avant-bop lines and succulent violin, before the album concludes with piledriving punkjazz. —Michael Jackson

Urban Myths: You Must Go Through A Winter; 125 And Lennox; Mood Rodeo; Last Waltz For Queva; Straight No Chaser (variations); Between The Traveler And The Setting Sun; Urban Myths; High Expectation, Low Return. (54:14)

Personnel: Joel Harrison, guitar; David Binney, alto saxophone; Christian Howes, violin; Daniel Kelly, keyboards; Stephan Crump, bass; Jordan Person, drums; Fima Ephron, electric bass (2, 8); Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Corey King, trombone (4, 5, 7); Jerome Sabbag, tenor sax (4, 5).

» Ordering info: yellowbird-records.com



Bobby Sanabria & Manhattan School of Music Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra

Kenya Revisited—Live!!!

JAZZHEADS 1167

★★★★

Hot college bands are rife these days, but New York has a Latin sizzler in Manhattan School of Music's Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra. This all-student orchestra wails an incandescent program under the tutelage of Bobby Sanabria.

The nuyorican drummer, timbalero and professor successfully combines passionate proselytizing, potent percussion, 30-second mini-lessons, vocal encouragement and inspirational ringleading on this exuberant, well-paced (if breathless) concert date. The band revisits and recreates *Kenya*, the 1957 LP masterpiece of Cuban composer/leader Mario Bauzá, recorded by Machito (a.k.a. Francisco Grillo) and his Afro-Cubans with altoist Cannonball Adderley, trumpeter Joe Newman and conguero Candido Camero (who reappears here as a special guest at age 88).

Though democratic leadership apportioned solos to all, kudos go to Justin Janer, formidably showcased on "Frenzy" and "Cannonology"; trumpeter Michael Taylor and altoist Vince Nero (in/out of tempo on "Oyeme"); and Harmon-muted trumpeter Jon Barnes on the borscht circuit cha-cha "Holiday."

The roller-coaster ride hits more peaks than valleys—quiet moments are rare as pianist Sands mulls over a free fantasia and Candido taps "Happy Birthday" on conga—and climaxes again and again, finally with flamboyant second-line boogaloo. —Fred Bouchard

Kenya Revisited—Live!!!: Frenzy; Congo Mulence; Kenya; Oyeme; Holiday; Cannonology; Wild Jungle; Blues A La Machito; Conversation; Theme & Variations On Tin Tin Deo; Tin Tin Deo; Minor Rama; Tururato. (73:12)

Personnel: Bobby Sanabria, conductor, background vocals, timbales (3), drums (8); Candido Camero, congas (4, 8, 14); Timothy Vaughn, Felix Fromm, Nate Adkins, Timothy "TJ" Robinson, trombones; Michael Taylor, Jimmie "JJ" Kirkpatrick, Jonathan Barnes, Anthony Stanco, trumpets; Justin Janer, Vince Nero, Pawan Benamin, Michael Davenport, saxophones; Christian Sylvester Sands, piano; Billy Norris, electric (12, 14) and acoustic bass; Norm Edwards, drums, bongo (8); Ciancarlo Anderson, Jake Golblas, Cristian Rivera, Obalinú Allende, percussion and background vocals.

» Ordering info: jazzheads.com

Ouellette Offers Warm, Meticulous Account of Ron Carter

It may look like traditional ink and paper, but Dan Ouellette's biography of bassist Ron Carter, *Finding The Right Notes (ArtistShare)*, is undeniably a product of the digital age.

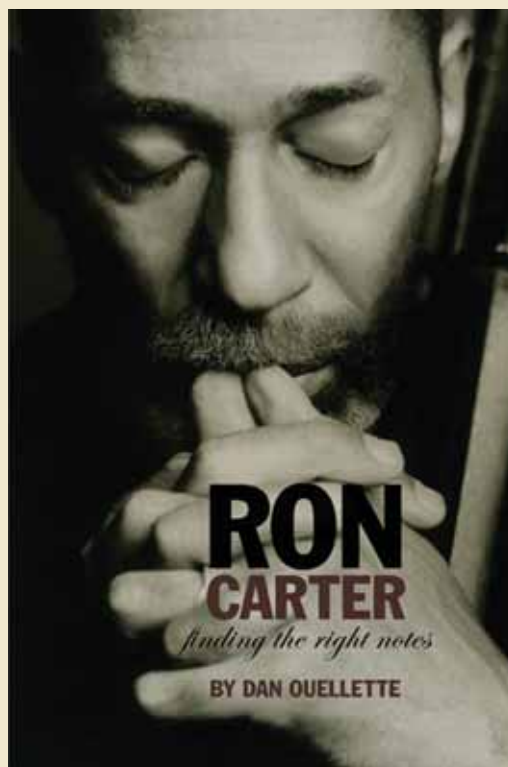
This is the first book published by the artist-driven, audience-participatory CD label and web site. Like other ArtistShare projects, Ouellette's book expands from the page to the web, with videos, photos and blog entries from the author that extend the story's reach and depth and promises to update it beyond the last page.

Given Carter's voluminous discography, Ouellette wisely abandons strict chronology, instead grouping chapters by significant portions of the bassist's output—bands, labels and genres. Once Carter's career begins in earnest, the book reads less like strict biography and more like a compendium of the critic's journalistic profiles.

The approach results in non-linear reading with some repetition. By the umpteenth time a younger musician cites the influence of Carter's years with Miles Davis or his impeccable dress, eyes may wander to the next paragraph.

The author's exhaustive research is impressive, but at times he leaves in what an editor at a more traditional publishing house would prune. The lengthy history of Carnegie Hall in the context of Carter's 70th birthday concert is valuable; its institutional prejudices and Carter's affront at slights reinforce the following chapters. But Ouellette's report of a 1981 trio gig includes a New York Times blurb that recites prices for admission and entrees, hardly adding to Carter's story.

These are small digressions in a meticulous and warmly appreciative portrait. The most compelling section is the opening chapters on Carter's early life. Growing up outside Detroit at a time when the city was embroiled in race riots and social upheaval, he was exposed to the viciousness of prejudice. The issue of



race continued to shadow the young musician as he studied classical cello and led to the realization that an orchestral career was nearly impossible for an African-American. This "dream deferred," as Ouellette terms it, is presented as a defining disappointment in Carter's life, not just for shifting his focus to jazz but in shaping the confrontational dignity with which he carries himself.

As for that famously prickly personality, Ouellette doesn't shy away from offering anecdotes by fellow musicians who have been rubbed the wrong way. Carter gradually comes across as one who refuses to suffer fools and bristling with self-defensiveness, much of it at the disrespect he feels he's been given in comparison with his bandmates from Davis' '60s quintet.

Ouellette's description of Carter's career rallies to his defense, but the slights he's suffered are, if sometimes unfair to his objective musicianship, understandable given the conservatism of his work compared to the adventurousness of Hancock, Shorter and Williams (not to mention Davis himself). Unlike their constant and well-documented reinventions, Carter is in the business of being Ron Carter; that for him seems to mean digging deeper into his music on a nightly basis, but not necessarily creating bold new contexts. **DB**

Ordering info: artistshare.com



Baritone Master Bluiett Rises, Shines with Students at Sunrise Conservatory

The gymnasium in the basement of a middle school in the University City school district isn't the performance venue usually associated with renowned baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett. But that's been his venue of choice once a week since the start of the school year as the instructor for a group of 11- and 12-year-old students who make up the Sunrise Conservatory Wind Ensemble.

"When I was growing up, I had music for a solid hour every day in school," Bluiett said. "Now it's something where these kids have to get up early and learn music outside the regular curriculum. So I guess that's why I'm here. I want to make sure the music keeps going. These kids need to hear jazz—and blues. I think I'm the first teacher to get these kids to play some blues."

The Sunrise Conservatory program is offered free to students in the fourth through sixth grades in the University City schools, which border the city of St. Louis. However, program facilitator Suzanne Schoomer emphasizes that it requires a serious commitment from the young students, who must be at this school by 7 a.m. Classes run from 7:15 to 8 a.m., then the students are bussed to other schools for performances or driven back to their own schools for regular classes.

It also requires a commitment from the teachers at Sunrise Conservatory. In addition to Bluiett, the staff includes noted St. Louis area musicians such as saxophonist Willie Akins, guitarist Kirk Hanser and drummer Bwayne Smotherson.

On a typical spring morning, the conservatory's wind ensemble includes a dozen students who play flute, various clarinets, trumpet, trombone and sousaphone. As they sit in folding chairs on the gym floor, Bluiett stands in the

center, calmly leading each section through the parts they will be playing later that morning at a recital at another elementary school—and later in the week at the evening concert.

Even if these students have no idea that their teacher has been a contributor to cutting-edge jazz for more than four decades, they have respect for Bluiett and concentrate on his words. For Bluiett, teaching seems to be his way of making a statement about his own philosophy.

"First of all, my goal is to get these young students to understand the basics of music and learn how to play together," Bluiett said. "But I also want to make sure they understand that music is part of the rest of the world around them. Think about it. The chromatic scale is 12 notes. There are 12 months in a year. Twelve hours on a clock. Why is all of that hooked up together? I want them to make those connections in terms of music and the rest of the humanities and mathematics. I want them to realize that even if they never go on to play music at a higher level, that music will always be part of their world."

Despite his reputation as an avant-garde player, Bluiett goes back to his own traditional learning experience as a foundation for dealing with his current students. George Hudson, who led a jazz band in St. Louis for decades, taught Bluiett, who was born across the Mississippi River in Lovejoy, Ill.

Bluiett adds that he gets quite a bit back from the teaching experience as well—in ways that help him with his own approach to musical creativity.

"I'm playing the clarinet again to teach these kids," Bluiett said. "And I'm enjoying it. And these kids are teaching me to be a lot more patient. That's something I always need more of."
—Terry Perkins

School Notes



Dr. Leonard: Herman Leonard received an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from Ohio University and delivered the commencement speech on June 13. Leonard, who received a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the school in 1947, told graduates to embrace the unconventional in pursuing their goals.

Details: hermanleonard.com

Israel Initiative: New York's New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music will partner with the Center for Jazz Studies at the Israel Conservatory of Music in Tel Aviv to help Israeli students earn a college-level jazz degree. In the BFA degree program, which begins this fall, students who begin their first two years at the Israeli conservatory will complete their final two years at the New School.

Details: newschool.edu

Berklee Returns: A group of Berklee College of Music's faculty and staff returned to New Orleans June 22–28 to help build homes as part of Habitat For Humanity's Musicians' Village project. The project is designed for musicians who lost their houses during hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Berklee students have returned to the studio to release, *Dedication*, the sixth album on the student-run Jazz Relevation Records label. Details: berklee.edu

Northwest Benefit: NPR-affiliate KPLU in Seattle has released its new compilation disc, *KPLU School of Jazz—Volume 5*. The disc features high school bands from the Seattle area as well as such guests as trumpeter Cuong Vu. Sales will benefit school music programs in Washington. Details: kplu.org

Princeton Debut: The Princeton University Sinfonia concluded its 2008–09 season with the premiere performance of Laurie Altman's jazz/classical composition on May 7. Details: princeton.edu

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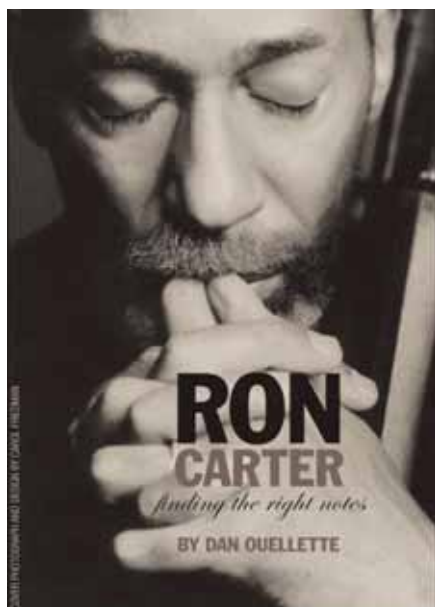
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Gerald Clayton

"Con Alma" (from *Two-Shade*, ArtistShare, 2009) Clayton, piano; Joe Sanders, bass; Justin Brown, drums.

That was a good solo. When I came to this country 50 years ago, those tempo rubato things were a no-no for a jazz player. It's more acceptable today, because so many players have incredible chops and come from a classical background. There's a bass player in California—this sounds like his son. I've played that tune a lot. The good thing about jazz is that everybody plays differently, and of course, I play differently, too. 4 stars.

Vanguard Jazz Orchestra

"In This Moment" (*Up From The Skies: Music Of Jim McNeely*, Planet Arts, 2006) Jim McNeely, piano; Nick Marchione, Frank Greene, Greg Gisbert, Scott Wendholt, trumpet, flugelhorn; Dick Oatts, Billy Drewes, alto, soprano saxophone, flute; Rich Perry, tenor saxophone, flute; Ralph LaLama, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute; Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; John Mosca, Luis Bonilla, Jason Jackson, trombone; Douglas Purviance, bass trombone; Dennis Irwin, bass; John Riley, drums.

Very European kind of writing. Gil Evans opened a Pandora's Box for Europe. European writers probably couldn't identify with someone like Duke Ellington. Identified maybe, but they couldn't write things like that—it was foreign to them. Because Gil Evans orchestrated for Miles Davis, that made him a household name, and the European writers can relate to the way he writes. Then, European writers also influenced American writers, who also write with those devices. It's pleasant, but boring. The trumpet player's sound was warm. Like most recordings, the little drums I could hear sounded high and didn't cover the whole orchestra the way it should. I have great respect for people who write something like this but it's not my cup of tea. 2½ stars.

The Bad Plus

"Fém" (*For All I Care*, Telarc, 2008) Ethan Iverson, piano; Reid Anderson, bass; Dave King, drums.

Is it part of some kind of suite? It has all kinds of interesting rhythmic evaluations, with everyone playing a different pattern in the same rhythm—at one point there are six beats, at one point there's a 4/4, and so on. When you're an improviser, to always have everybody play the same rhythm is bound to happen once or twice. But it sounds like it's all written. It's kind of cute, kind of interesting, and that's about it. Since I don't know what it's about, I decline to give any stars.

Martial Solal

"Lover Man" (from *Live At The Village Vanguard*, CamJazz, 2009) Solal, piano.

High spirit. (*laughs*) A lot of chops. But nowadays most people have a lot of chops. I don't know what he is doing with "Lover Man." I don't know why, but this reminded me of the George Gershwin era. I think it's a man. It's good playing, but I'm not sure if it has anything to do with jazz. To each his own. 3 stars. (*after*) The first time I got a job in Paris, in 1964, when I met him, Martial Solal wasn't playing like that. I guess he progressed in his own way.

Chucho Valdés

"To Bud Powell" (from *Live At The Village Vanguard*, Blue Note, 2000) (Valdés, piano; Rubio Pampin, bass; Raul Pineda Roque, drums; Roberto Vizcaino Guillot, congas, bata drums.

That's a lot of energy. Phenomenal chops. It seems there's a conga player



JACK WARTOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

and a regular drummer, and the drummer sounds good. I can't say anything about this piano player, because I have respect for his energy and his chops. You have to have strength. You have to be physically fit. Musically, not really. Sometimes it made me crack up because his chops are so unbelievable, playing a lot of notes in a short second, so on and so on. Whether that is selective notes or not is another question. 3 stars. (*after*) That's injustice to Bud. Bud had phenomenal technique. But his phenomenal technique was put on the right note. All the notes are in the right place. Everything was thought out. It's not the thing like you land your finger on this key, therefore you play it. Everything is the right note in the right place. It's total contrast to this piano player.

Carla Bley Big Band

"Awful Coffee" (from *Appearing Nightly*, ECM, 2008) Lew Soloff, Earl Gardner, Florian Esch, trumpets; Beppe Calamosca, Gary Valente, Gigi Grata, Richard Henry, trombone; Roger Jannotta, soprano and alto saxophones, flute; Wolfgang Puschnig, alto saxophone, flute; Andy Sheppard, Christophe Panzani, tenor saxophone; Julian Argüelles, baritone saxophone; Carla Bley, piano; Karen Mantler, organ; Steve Swallow, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.

Interesting arrangement. The baritone sounded good. The tenor player sounded good—average good. Everybody is a good player. It doesn't have a strong personality as a composition, but it worked well, the background and all that. I think it's a woman writer—it's not quite gutsy. It sounds like an off-and-on working band. 3½ stars.

Fred Hersch

"Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love/Jump Monk" (*Songs Without Words: Vol. 2, Jazz Tunes*, Nonesuch, 2001) Hersch, piano.

That reminded me of John Lewis, but I never heard John Lewis playing this many notes—most of his solos are simpler than that. Except in the very beginning, everything was on time, which you rarely hear today. I liked it. The first part reminded me of "Lush Life," then it went to something else. 4½ stars.

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